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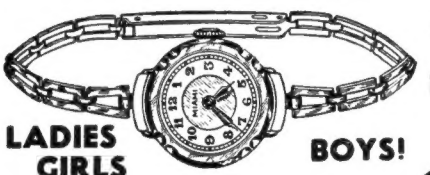

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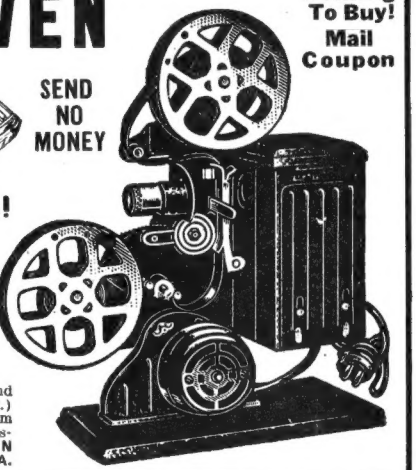

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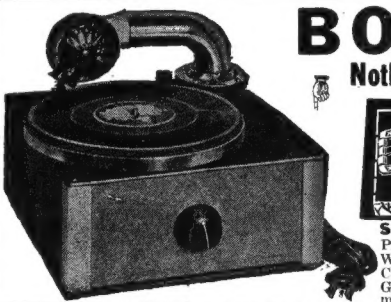

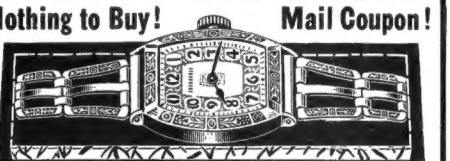

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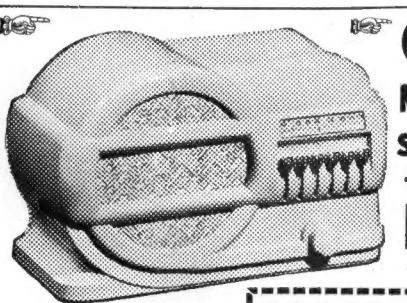

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Six position—Automatic Tuning—Superhet AC-DC—GET THE NEWS! London, Berlin, Paris, Moscow, Rome etc. or American Broadcast Band. SWELL! This Radio, Cash or choice of other wonderful Premiums GIVEN—SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE good size beautifully colored popular Art Pictures with our well known White CLOVERINE Brand **SALVE** used for chaps, mild burns, shallow cuts, etc. Salve easily sold to friends, relatives, and neighbors at 25c a box (with favorite picture FREE). Remit and select premium as explained in premium catalog. 45th year. We are reliable. Mail Coupon! **WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 91-H, TYRONE, PA.**

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I jumped from $18 a week to $50
--a Free Book started me toward this GOOD PAY IN RADIO

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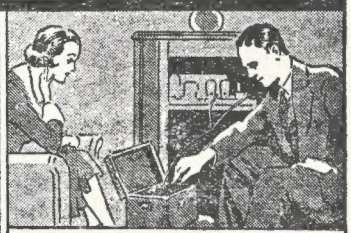
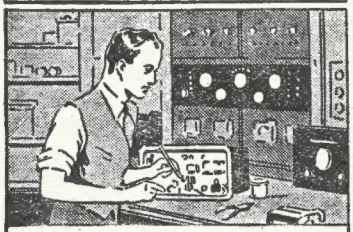
by S. J. E.
(NAME AND ADDRESS SENT UPON REQUEST)

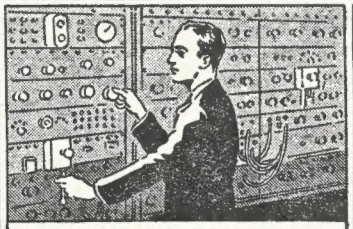
"I had an $18 a week job in a shoe factory. I'd probably be at it today if I hadn't read about the opportunities in Radio and started training at home for them."



"The training National Radio Institute gave me was so practical I was soon ready to make $5 to $10 a week in spare time servicing Radio sets."



"When I finished training I accepted a job as serviceman with a Radio store. In about three weeks I was made service manager at more than twice what I earned in the shoe factory."



"Eight months later N.R.I. Employment Department sent me to Station KWCR as a Radio operator. Now I am Radio Engineer at Station WSUI. I am also connected with Television Station W9XK."

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J. E. Smith, President
Dept. OBS9, National Radio Institute
Washington, D. C.

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J. E. Smith, President, Dept. OBS9,
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith. Send me FREE, without obligation, your 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio" which points out Radio's opportunities and tells how you train men at home to be Radio Technicians. (Write Plainly.)

Name..... Age.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

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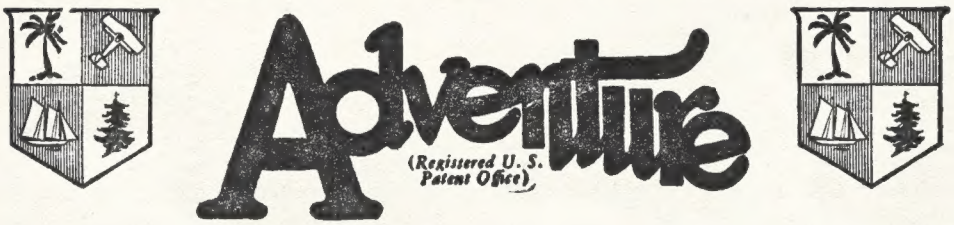

Vol. 102, No. 4 for February, 1940 Best of New Stories

Quantrell's Flag (1st part of 4) . . . . . FRANK GRUBER 6
Brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor, Missouri and Bloody Kansas answer Abe Lincoln's call to war, and guerrilla guns crack from the roadside bushes.

Buzzard Bait (a novelette) . . . . . W. C. TUTTLE 36
He was a busted cowboy and he carried a dead man's lucky piece into the canyon where buzzards and bullets waited.

Saturday's Whale . . . . . RICHARD MATTHEWS HALLET 61
"Rise and chime, ye thickheads of hell! Bend the ash. Grit the front ends of your teeth off, and harness me a whale!"

"Heil, Mr. Hitler!" . . . . . CARL RUPPERT 69
Big Karl Zimmerman hoists a cargo of death for America, which had disowned him—and swears a strange oath of allegiance.

The Anger of the Dove . . . . . A. GROVE DAY 78
He was quick to smile and quick to kill, but sometimes Justice rode behind the dusty saddle of a peon called Pancho Villa.

The Drum of Pegu . . . . . H. BEDFORD-JONES 87
The stern guns roared and the Dutchman reeled and under the smoke of a British battle drum beat out a voice of doom—"Burleigh Coombe o' Bideford—fire the larboard broadside!"

Twenty Dollar Debt (an off-the-trail story) . . . . LAWRENCE TREAT 97
The world owed Sprad a living, and he roamed up and down the highways looking for it—point of gun or blade of axe, he'd use any weapon to collect it.

Death in Swift Pursuit . . . . . NANCE POPE 105
No stampede of an elephant herd can carry the death that rolls on the wheels of a runaway truck—no rodeo horse can be as tough to ride.

The Camp-Fire . . . . . Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 112

Ask Adventure . . . . . Information you can't get elsewhere 117

Trail Ahead . . . . . News of next month's issue 126

Lost Trails . . . . . Where old paths cross 3

Cover by Wesley Neff
Headings by John Clymer, Hamilton Green, I. B. Hazelton, Peter Kuhlhoff and Ralph Smith
Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

Published once a month by Popular Publications, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices, 205 East Forty-second Street New York City. Harry Steeger, President and Secretary. Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice President and Treasurer. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 2, 1935, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under the act of March 3, 1879. Yearly subscription $1.50 in advance. Single copy, 15 cents. Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Subscription Dept., 205 East 42nd St., New York, N. Y. Trade Mark registered. Copyright, 1940, by Popular Publications, Inc. All rights reserved under Pan American Copyright Convention. Printed in U.S.A.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or the fates. For the benefit of the friend you seek, give your own name and full address if possible. All inquiries along this line, unless otherwise designated, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, every inquiry addressed to "Lost Trails" will be run in three consecutive issues.

Otto Pfender, now 31, blonde, heard from in Cheyenne, Wyoming in 1924. His father has died. Word wanted by his mother, Mrs. Marie Pfender, 921 S.W. 5th Ave., Miami, Fla.

Jack Eugene Barry, 65, heard from at Blackstone Hotel, San Francisco, February, 1936. Write his son Donald Leon Barry, 312-17th Street, Fairfield, Alabama.

James P. Dale, 5 ft. 11, red hair, heard from in Los Angeles and Milwaukee in 1937 —word wanted by his mother, Nyla Scott De Marcus, c/o Box 522, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Charles Albert Myers, of Grand Forks, North Dakota, and his brothers Pete, Roy, Tom and John Myers, all born in New York State. Send word to William S. Myers, General Delivery, Alder, Montana.

Any members of the 1231st Co., C.C.C., stationed at Olympia, Wash., during 1933-34, especially Daniel F. Sprague, George Memmoll, and Peter Potocki, please get in touch with James Richter, 608½ W. 48th Street, Los Angeles, California.

I want to re-contact members of Co. A.—106th Engineers, who were in Camp Harris and Wheeler, at Macon, Georgia, June 12th to Sept. 25th, 1917. D. F. Arthur, Bay Pines, Fla.

Bob Wales (Robert) worked with me at Carytham Farm in 1937 in the Dairy at Bridgehampton, L. I. (Red) K. J. Craft, 26 Broadway, Socony Vacuum Oil Co., N.Y.C., c/o S. S. Java Arrow. Where is he now?

(Continued on page 4)

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DYNAMIC WELDER COMPANY
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

(Continued from page 3)

William O'Connors, last heard from at Redfield, South Dakota in 1910. Word wanted by his mother, Mrs. Agnes Button, 520 N.E. 2nd Ave., Miami, Florida.

Would like to hear from R. E. Pullman & Anthony Cooper who were with me in California in 1919. William John Carson, 760 Pardella, Lemay, Mo.

Would like address of Sgt. Dowd who came from Philippine Islands with Paul D. Brown in Oct. 1917. Both in the U.S.A. They were assigned to Camp Sherman Chillicothe, Ohio Medical Supply Depot and were there a few months in 1918. Anyone knowing address, notify Rush Bowman, Gen. Del., Redding, California.

Lawrence E. Barron, last heard of in Alaska four years ago. Please write to his mother, Julia A. Barron, Keene, N. H.

Richard Dinger, was 2nd mate of S.S. Tisue in the Pacific Fleet about 1892, at one time employed by the Masters Mates Pilots Union in San Francisco employed by the Panama Canal in 1908. When last heard of he was employed by the United Fruit Co., in Tela, Honduras. Very important to know in what court he was naturalized American. Information will be appreciated by his son Richard Dinger, Box 809, Ancon, Canal Zone.

Robt. V. Calkins, last heard of in the jungles of Venezuela, where he was employed in road construction work as a technician, and whose mailing address was, Mene Grande Oil Company, Apartado No. 45, Barcelona via Guanta, Estado Anzoatequi, Venezuela, South America. Important that I hear from him, or of him. Montgomery Brown, 240 S. Seminary St., Galesburg, Ill.

John F. Rush, formerly of Tacoma, Wash. Last heard of in Chico, Calif. Any news of him or his whereabouts will be gratefully appreciated. Address any information to Mrs. Marie A. Carney, 6445 N. Commercial Ave., Portland, Oregon.

Lou Raitt. Served in Co. 980, C.C.C. Baker, Oregon. Later served in the U.S.A. in the Philippine Is. Last heard from he was working somewhere out of Oregon City, Ore. Anyone knowing his whereabouts please write to Hilton Collins, Gen. Delivery, Anchorage, Alaska.

Wanted: Information concerning Frank Arch. Rowan who lived in Brooklyn, N. Y. and married Ellen Duffy. About twenty years ago he went to war. Very urgent. I have good news for him. Philip Eichorn, 126 E. Jefferson, Detroit.

Wanted: Information of one Dolores Perkins whose last known address was c/o Wagon Lits #27, Alcala, Madrid, Spain, June 9, 1935. Her mother is ill and very anxious to hear of her whereabouts. Communicate with Mrs. Frances Brewer, 1166 West Jefferson Street, Los Angeles, California.

Joseph Kubrich, usually known as Jess or Jay Reid. In 1932 he was in Upton, Wyoming, on the 3-S Ranch; at one time worked on the old 101 Ranch, also for S.Y. at Gillette, Wyoming; also at C/O Ranch, Newcastle, Wyoming. He is now 34. Write his sister, Theresa K. Ostrowski, Venice, California.

The "East-Midwest Post, Veterans A.E.F. Siberia," is appealing to your very helpful "Lost Trails" column in trying to locate the scattered remnants of the Siberia Expedition of 1918-20. To all ex-Wolfhounds located, I shall gladly send information regarding the Post of this country-wide organization nearest their respective homes. John G. Foley, Adjutant, Veterans A.E.F. Siberia, Armory Bd., Municipal Bldg., N. Y. City.

Chess Tripp or Swede write William A. West, at Morenci, Arizona. Last heard of in Toole, Utah, in 1929.

Any information wanted as to the whereabouts of Frank Muzyka, last heard of in Victoria, B. C., in 1928; age now 36. Edward Muzyka, Krasne, Sask., Canada.

Ben Davis, last heard from at Watsonville, Calif., about 23 years ago. Word wanted by his sister, Mrs. Hattie Patterson, Box 819, Shafter, Calif.

Comrades who served in the Medical Detachment, Adrian Barracks Casual Camp, Nevers, France, from July 1918 to February 1919, especially Pvt. Keisman, pharmacist, and Sgt. Truesdale, please communicate with Ex-Sgt. A. B. Knox, Box 1341, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Lee Gordon—You wrote to me while I was in the East, during 1927 to 1933. Where are you now? Frank Cruse—You painted in my studio while I lived back East, then left for the Army, about 1933 or '34. Write to me. Address Joseph M. Portal, Route 3, Box 552, Salem, Oregon.

Monico Colón, a Puerto Rican, living in New York in 1932. Write Florencio Colón Colón, P. O. Box 423, Utuado, P. R.

John Hall, formerly of Manning Ave., Toronto. Last heard of in Los Angeles. Have important news to communicate. Old friend would appreciate present address. Chas. A. Cronin, 622 Euclid Ave., Toronto, Ontario.

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QUANTRELL'S
FLAG
By
FRANK
GRUBER

Fighting, hiding, fighting — a novel of the guerrillas.

**Before beginning this story, read Mr. Gruber's note in Camp-Fire, page 113.*

PRIDE stiffened the spine of Second Lieutenant Doniphan Fletcher as he stood on the grassy knoll and watched wave after wave of his country's finest young men swirl down upon the muddy stream that was called Bull Run.

They were militiamen, these soldiers, and they looked so brave and magnificent in their brilliantly colored uniforms; the New York Zouaves, in red Oriental trousers, the Pennsylvania Volunteers in bright blue and the regiments from Ohio and Michigan, New Jersey and Illinois, each in their own distinctive uniforms.

They were militiamen, yet to them had been given the honor of crushing the rebel horde that dared to call itself an army. And Doniphan Fletcher, a commissioned officer in the regular army, had to stand back here on this knoll as a spectator.

It wouldn't be much of a fight, of course. Probably just a thrust here and there, then a swift charge along the entire front and it would be all over. Except the surrender and march back to Washington, amid the cheers of the thousands upon thousands of spectators that lined the ridge on which Donny Fletcher himself stood.

There were almost as many noncombatants here on this ridge as there were soldiers down there. There were Congressmen, politicians and their ladies, civilians who had come to see history in the making. For this was The Day. The day when McDowell's army would crush the rebel host and break the backbone of the revolution. It was all going to be settled today—secession, sovereignty of state, slavery.

This war between the states, the conflict that had been inevitable for so many years, was going to be fought today. And Donny Fletcher, who had spent four long years at West Point, who had been graduated three weeks ago on the eve of this event, was not taking a part in it.

It was the fault of those stuffed shirts in Washington. They were all tied up in their red tape. While he and his classmates, men who had been trained for this, were standing on this hilltop as spectators, the battle was going to be fought by militia.

A cannon roared and another and another. The thunder was almost drowned by the roar that went up among the multitude upon the ridge.

"The battle's started!" screamed a thousand throats.

Dignified men and staid women suddenly seemed to lose their reason. They rushed about, leaped up and down in their excitement. A Senator from a border state threw his stovepipe hat in the air and failed to catch it as it came down. A young girl in crinoline and silk kicked the hat gleefully in Donny Fletcher's direction and yelled at him:

"Why aren't you down there with them?"

Donny grinned wryly, shook his head and paid no more attention to the young lady. The crackle of rifle fire broke out along the line below and his attention was riveted upon the meandering little stream that divided the two armies.

In a few minutes— Yes, there they were! The first wave was advancing upon the creek.

The cannonading became terrific, as thirty thousand rifles on both sides belched out clouds of smoke that soon rolled about the troops and enveloped them into anonymity. Under cover of it, the militiamen from the North forded Bull Run at a dozen points.

They were next seen advancing upon the higher ground on the other side—and the Southern rabble was in flight!

The North had won! They had driven the rebels from their positions, with almost ridiculous ease.

THE civilian spectators upon the ridge saw the victory before the troops that had won it. They surged down from their vantage point, toward Bull Run, to see at closer range the final rout and surrender. The din they made, the screaming and yelling, rose above the sound of the cannons, now firing all up and down the line.

But . . . a puff of wind blows away the smoke on the left, far bank of Bull Run. A brigade of Confederates has refused to retreat; it is standing like a stone wall. The Union advance breaks upon it, falters and gives way.

No! They cannot be retreating, those splendid New York Zouaves, with their red Oriental breeches, the Pennsylvania Blues. They're the flower of the North. They cannot be retreating.

But they are. And on the right, a battery of artillery has become strangely silent. A horde of Confederates, a ragged, irregular horde without the least semblance of rank or order, appears and moves forward. Before it, the Union army goes back. It crosses the river again in full retreat.

The thousands of spectators in the rear have become silent. Almost, as if

by command, they move back upon the heights. Here and there a party gets into its carriage and drives northward.

The Union army is lost again in the clouds of smoke; it reappears a considerable distance from the stream that is known as Bull Run. They are going back—slowly, for a division of the regular army has been hurriedly thrust between them and the foe and they are pouring a merciless fire into the masses of gray.

But the militiamen are still retreating. The civilians on the ridge have given away, and soon it is occupied by soldiers. Brigades and regiments are deployed, batteries of artillery set up their guns.

The Confederates have been too strong, but a slow, steady retreat is not a defeat. The ranks can yet be formed, new regiments and brigades thrown in. Another advance can be started, if the division of regulars can hold the enemy in check for an hour or two.

But they cannot. The fiery Southerners have had a taste of victory; they are advancing now, crossing the narrow stream of water that has been reddened by Northern blood. The Union regulars are fighting stubbornly, but give way under the sheer weight of numbers.

If the artillery upon the hill can only shatter those waves of gray, hold them back for just a little while. Those guns down there, across the river, their fire is becoming more rapid, more thundering. Shells are bursting upon the ridge so lately vacated by the civilians.

The artillerymen of the North cannot stand to their cannon. They are retreating.

The last hope of the Northern army is gone. Their defense has been broken. The infantry, unsupported, retreats faster. It becomes a rout.

The troops overtake the civilians at the Rapidan. The latter become hysterical and panic-stricken. They whip up their horses and dash them into the water, regardless of fords. Horses flounder, carriages are overturned and men and women thrown into the water.

Silk hats bob here and there; bright colored parasols float and swirl upon the muddied stream. Soldiers enter the water, mingle with the civilians.

"They're coming!" the soldiers yell. "The rebels are coming! Hurry—get out of the way! They'll kill us all!"

Donny Fletcher is down there. He wades the Rapidan in his brand-new blue uniform that he bought only four days ago. He walks through the night, glad that it is dark and he cannot see the shame upon the faces of the soldiers and civilians that are all about him.

IN THE morning Donny Fletcher reached Washington City. In his still damp, wrinkled uniform, he made his way to the Levitt Hotel. Here there came, after awhile, one by one, four of his classmates.

There was a lean, lank, yellow-haired stripling from Michigan, Custer by name. There was also Bailey of Massachusetts, Wheeler of Ohio, Johnson from Wisconsin. They had not all been at Bull Run, but they all knew what had happened.

"Why don't they assign us to commands!" fumed Bailey of Massachusetts. "Those Washington vote-grabbers know no more about commanding troops than we do of stuffing a ballot box."

The tall Custer sneered. "Red tape! Washington's all tied up with it—so tight even a Congressman can't cut it."

"The trouble," said Wheeler of Ohio, "is that there are too damned many Congressmen. Each has his bills and recommendations and his patronage. They've bogged down the administration."

"I'm going," said Donny Fletcher. "It may be weeks and weeks yet and I've got to go home."

"To Missouri, Donny?" asked sober Lieutenant Johnson.

Donny Fletcher nodded. "They're going to fight there. Lyon is moving on Price. Missouri wanted to be neutral, but they won't let her be. They're going to have such a war there that even Bull Run will seem like a skirmish."

Yellow-haired Custer sniffed. "In those Ozark brush patches? Hell, Fletcher, there isn't enough cleared land in Missouri to make a decent cavalry charge."

"You're wrong, George," said Donny Fletcher. "The war is new here, but it's been going on in Missouri since '56. Our

border ruffians have been going into Kansas. Their Redlegs and Jayhawkers have been coming to Missouri. Missourians voted at the Kansas polls, sacked the town of Lawrence. And Kansas Redlegs and Jayhawkers have raided Missouri and robbed and burned and killed."

Young Lieutenant Bailey of Massachusetts flushed. "I know. A lot of our Massachusetts Abolitionists have gone out there. Some have made fine Redlegs and Jayhawkers."

"But you, Fletcher," cut in Custer, "isn't your father a slave-holder?"

Donny replied evenly: "Yes. We moved to Jackson County, Missouri, from Kentucky, in '39. All our people have owned slaves, for generations. But no Fletcher has ever raided into Kansas. We're not border ruffians."

CHAPTER II

THE BORDER LANDS

WHEELING ISLAND was a huge army camp. Cincinnati was recruiting and St. Louis was in a fever of mobilization. The Confederate flags had come down only a few weeks before, but the Secesh sympathizers were still here, even though they no longer shouted their political creed from the street corners. Lyon had captured Camp Jackson in Lindell Grove and dispersed the state guard. He had defied the constitutionally elected governor and driven him into flight. He had defeated a section of Sterling Price's militia at Boonville and was down now near Springfield with an army composed of Missouri, Kansas, Iowa and Illinois troops, plus a detachment of Federals.

It seemed to Donny Fletcher that almost every other man in St. Louis wore a uniform. Officers walking down Olive Street by twos and threes made a fine show with their clanking swords and spurs. Cavalry recruits galloped their horses down the street and civilians' carriages and wagons made way for them.

At almost every street corner leather-lunged recruiting sergeants exhorted passing men to join up with Abe Lincoln and the Union.

The big crowds, though, were down at the levee. As far as Donny Fletcher could see in each direction, river steamers and packets were moored. Stevedores unloaded corn from Iowa, wheat from Minnesota and Wisconsin, barley from Illinois and, surprisingly, bale after bale of cotton from Mississippi and Tennessee. St. Louis was the metropolis of the west, the port of the inland waters.

Donny Fletcher searched for the *Polar Star*, the flat-bottomed packet on which he was to travel the last leg of his journey up the Missouri River.

A carpet-bag in each hand, he strolled northward along the waterfront, a lean, dark young man wearing a cutaway coat, gray trousers and a silk hat. A ruffled shirt and silk waitcoat completed his ensemble. People looked at him as he passed, for most men of his age were wearing uniforms these days.

After awhile he found the *Polar Star* and was pleasantly surprised. It was a luxurious, commodious packet, twice the size of the one on which he had come down-river four years ago.

An officer stood at the gang-plank. Donny put down his carpetbags and took a ticket from his pocket.

"Kansas City," he said.

The officer pursed his lips. "That's as far as you're going?"

"On the boat, yes. My home is a few miles south of Kansas City. Near Lees Summit."

"Oh," said the officer, "in Jackson County. That's fine." He handed the ticket back to Donny.

His tone arrested Donny. "Why did you ask where I lived? You don't usually do that, do you?"

The man shook his head. "It's none of our business, really. Only now—well, times are unsettled. We were boarded our last trip, at Lexington, by a band of —irregular soldiers. They took off several passengers whose destination was Kansas. So we are cautioning passengers."

"What do you mean by irregular soldiers? Southerners?"

The packet officer looked down at his hands. "Sort of." And that was as much

as he would say. A steward came down the gangplank then and picked up Donny's bags. He led him to a small cabin.

The room contained a cot, a washstand with pitcher and water and a small chest of drawers. There was a tiny window opening on the deck. It was insufferably hot in the room.

"Be cooler when we get going," the steward told Donny.

Donny took off his silk hat and fanned his face with it. "I hope so. St. Louis has always been a little too hot for me."

"Ain't it hotter down South, sir?" the steward asked.

"I don't know. I've never been farther south than St. Louis."

The steward looked oddly at him, then stepped to the door.

"If you need anything just blow into that tube," he said, nodding to a speaking tube in the wall.

Donny took off his coat and washed his face and hands. Perspiration filmed his face before he had dried himself with the towel. He put on his coat again and walked out on deck. Other passengers lined the rail and Donny, looking overside, saw that there was considerable activity on shore. The boat was evidently due to start in a little while.

HE discovered the saloon and found it crowded with both men and women. There was a bar just off it and he stepped inside to get a glass of beer, a refreshment that had been denied him these last four years.

He'd almost forgotten what it tasted like and as he quaffed the cool St. Louis brew, a little wave of nostalgia swept over him. It would be good to be home. His cool room, with the cross ventilation and the big oak tree shading the south window, a soft bed and clean, cool sheets.

Tall, moisture-beaded glasses of fragrant mint julep . . . hot biscuits with honey . . . fresh ham . . . fried chicken the way Mammy Lou made it. . . .

A harsh voice swept it all away. "That's Dutchman's stuff you're drinkin', mister!"

Donny Fletcher half turned. A man even taller than himself stood beside him, a glass of whiskey in a massive fist. An insolent sneer twisted sensuous lips and gave a satanic cast to a rather handsome face.

The man wore a fine black Prince Albert with a velvet collar, broadcloth trousers, brocaded vest and starched linen. A slouch hat was set rakishly on his head, not quite concealing abnormally long hair. He was in his middle twenties.

Donny Fletcher looked into the man's greenish eyes, then shot a glance at his half filled glass of beer.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "did you say something to me?"

"I did," the other replied. "I invited you to have a drink with me."

"Thank you," said Donny, "but I've got a drink. A good Dutchman's drink!"

The greenish eyes dropped to Donny's gray Prince Albert, came up to his eyes. "You don't look it."

"Look what?" Donny challenged.

"Like a Dutchman."

"My family's from Kentucky. We live in Missouri, now. Jackson County. But what's wrong with Dutchmen?"

"Since you're from Jackson County —nothing!"

"I don't get it."

The tall man grinned suddenly and looked five years younger.

"My name's Anderson," he said. "I live near Westport."

The name had a familiar ring, but not a pleasant one. There was a family of Andersons in Jackson, a large family— no, this couldn't be a member of that Anderson family.

Donny said. "My name's Doniphan Fletcher. Perhaps you know my father, Louis Fletcher."

Anderson nodded slowly. "Louis Fletcher. Had a son went to West Point?"

"That's right. I'm the one. My brother is four years younger. He's at home."

"More likely he's joined up with Pap Price," said Anderson. "Ain't many fellas that age at home in Jackson, now."

Donny looked steadily into Anderson's green eyes, then dropped his gaze to his glass of beer.

"Funny," Anderson went on, "there are Kentucky folks in Jackson that ain't on our side. Some you'd never thought. Man named Wilcoxon at The Landing, owns slaves and up and joined the Yankee army. . . ."

"I think—" Donny began, coldly.

"Woo-woo-ee!" tooted the whistle of the steamboat. Then, again, "woo-woo-woo-ee!"

Donny Fletcher winced from the blast, then put down his half emptied glass of beer and joined in the general rush of the passengers to the deck.

Porters and stewards rushed back and forth with baggage; officers thundered commands and blew on piping whistles. Passengers on the deck waved good-by to friends and relatives on the levee.

Hands had loosened the fastenings of the gangplank and were about to haul it in, when two belated passengers sprang upon it. Donny Fletcher watched them with interest. One was a middle-aged man with a black full beard that came to his chest. He struggled with two carpet-bags and herded his companion before him.

This was a girl a young lady. She wore a green velvet traveling suit that must have been stifling in the ninety-five degree heat. She carried a round leather hat box that she dropped on the gangplank as she hastened up.

Three men from the deck sprang down to retrieve the hat box; they got themselves all tangled and the girl scooped up the box herself and continued up the plank, her face flushed a deep crimson. She had to wait for the chivalrous gentlemen to clear her passage.

Donny lost the girl as she and the man with the beard were swallowed up in the deck crowd. He didn't see her again until in the evening, after the *Polar Star* had passed Alton and turned into the broad Missouri, headed westward for St. Charles, Boonville, Lexington, Kansas City.

She was sitting in the saloon then, wearing a crinoline evening gown with a tight bodice and a Spanish lace shawl over her shoulders. She was alone, but there was nothing unusual about that. Most of the travelers had forsaken their stifling cabins. The decks, of course, were preferred, but there was too much light on them.

He saw the saturnine Anderson then, too. He was sitting at a little table a few feet away, watching the girl in the evening dress.

Donny saw a little table on the far side of the room and sat down by it, turning his chair, so he did not face Anderson, but could still see him and the girl beyond, by turning his head a little. He signaled to a waiter and ordered a mint julep, then frowned and changed the order to a glass of beer.

THE waiter brought the beer, and as Donny took a sip of it, he saw the black-bearded man come into the saloon and look around. He located the girl after a moment and walked to her table and sat down.

Anderson rose then. A sardonic smile twisted his face and he walked to the other table. Donny could just hear his deep voice:

"Major Benton! Well, well! Been on a trip?"

The bearded man turned up his face and Donny saw there was no welcome in it. He said something, but Donny could not hear the words. He saw their result, however. Anderson's smile left his lips and his head jerked forward an inch. Then the smile came back, more crooked than before.

He said: "Your daughter, Susan, I believe?"

Donny heard the bearded man's reply, then. It was sharp. "Good evening, sir!"

Donny pushed back his chair. He strode deliberately toward Anderson and when he came up, said: "Mr. Anderson, I'll join you in that drink now!"

The tall Anderson jerked around. He recognized Donny and sneered: "Dutchman's beer? No, thanks!"

Donny reached out and took Anderson's arm, surprised a little at the hardness of it. He said: "Not beer, whiskey!"

Anderson's nostrils flared and his eyes seemed greener than ever. Then the muscles in his arm, under Donny's grip, softened. "All right, I don't mind if I do."

"Mr. Anderson, I'll join you in that drink — now!"

But they did not have their drink together. In the corner nearest the bar, a lively little party was going on. There were two men and four women in the party. The women were not Susan Benton's type.

There were glasses on the table before them and they were laughing and giggling.

One of them saw Anderson and cried out: "Bill Anderson!"

Anderson chuckled. "Hello Della!" he called jovially. He turned to Donny. "Sorry, Mr. Fletcher, but I won't drink with you after all. Unless you want to join the party."

"Thank you, no," said Donny. "I think I'll turn in."

Anderson took a step away, then stopped and turned. "I'll see you again, Fletcher!" There was an unpleasant promise in his tone, although his mouth was smiling again.

Donny changed his direction and moved toward the door leading to the deck. Major Benton headed him off.

"I want to thank you for taking that man away," he said.

Donny bowed slightly. "I could see he was annoying you and your daughter."

Major Benton bobbed his head. "You're the Fletcher boy, aren't you? The one who just graduated from West Point?"

Donny was surprised. "Yes, but—"

"I live in Lees Summit. Moved there after you went east. Know your father well. Come over and meet my daughter."

He took Donny's arm.

As they walked back to Major Benton's table, Donny shot a glance across the saloon and saw Bill Anderson watching him. He bit his lip.

And then he was looking into Susan Benton's blue eyes. Her hair was a soft, golden blond, her complexion the smoothest Donny had ever seen, her features finer than those of any of the girls who had come to the infrequent West Point dances.

"My daughter, Susan, Mr. Fletcher," Major Benton was saying.

Donny bowed and murmured a politeness, then saw Susan Benton's hand. He took it.

She said: "I've heard so much about you, I feel I know you. Your mother expected you home last summer and then you went to Virginia instead."

"George Rosser insisted I visit with him. But say—you know my mother?"

"Of course. We're neighbors. Didn't you know?"

YES, of course he'd known. His mother and his brother, Stephen Kearney, had both mentioned her in their letters. Stephen's had been particularly enthusiastic in his description of "the girl next door," but then Stephen had been writ-

ing about girls to Donny since his plebe year. His interest in the opposite sex had started young.

"Sit down, Mr. Fletcher, won't you?" rumbled Major Benton. "We've only been away from home two weeks. We'll give you the latest news of your family. I'm glad to say that all this hasn't made any difference between your family and mine."

Donny pulled out a chair. Then he said: "All what?"

Major Benton's eyes drew together a little. He cleared his throat. "Sorry. I shouldn't have got on that subject. Can't seem to help it."

Donny looked from the major to Susan Benton. Her face was tight and her mouth slightly open. She saw his eyes on her and laughed shortly.

"What father's trying to say," she said, "is that we can be friends even though we're on opposite sides politically."

"But we aren't!" Donny exclaimed. "You're Union and I'm a second lieutenant in the United States Army."

"Eh?" said Major Benton. "Oh yes, you've graduated from West Point. But you're going home now, aren't you?"

"That doesn't change the facts any. At present, I'm still unassigned, but my orders may come any day. You see—" He stopped. Susan Benton's blue eyes were wide.

She said, softly: "Don't you know? Haven't you heard—"

Major Benton inhaled deeply. "Your brother, Stephen, he enlisted in the state guard. I thought—well, your father—"

Donny Fletcher stared for a moment. He moistened his lips.

"I hadn't heard," he said, slowly. "Steve's—with Sterling Price?"

Susan Benton nodded. "His regiment left just before we went to St. Louis."

Donny shook his head, soberly. "I'm sorry. He should have waited. I guess that's why they wrote me to come home. I couldn't, though. We weren't graduated until three weeks ago and we expected any day to get our assignments."

Major Benton stroked his glossy beard. "Never talk politics with your father. Naturally, I considered him a Southern man."

"He's from Kentucky," Donny said. "They've always owned slaves—"

"He sold all of them," cut in Major Benton. "He sent them down to New Orleans six months ago, when those border ruffians started jumping across the line."

There was more, much more, but Donny couldn't take it all in. Some of it was too unbelievable. Oh, there'd been talk of those things even at The Point, but the work had been hard there, the hours long. There wasn't much time to read the infrequent newspapers that came into the quarters.

Border ruffian. The phrase was an old one by now, of course. It hadn't been new in '57. In '56 three thousand of them had looted Lawrence, Kansas, the stronghold of the Abolitionist crowd in Kansas. Missourians had hopped across the line to vote in Kansas in '55. They won, by fraud, every seat in the Kansas territorial legislature. But Redlegs and Jayhawkers had slunk across the line into Missouri; they rang the golden bell of the underground railway, spread the velvet cloak of religion and let the simple slaves hear the rustle of black wings.

Oh, this had been going on ever since the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. The South wanted Kansas a slave state, the North was just as determined to make it free. Missourians staked claims in Kansas; the Emigrant Aid Society of Massachusetts sent colonists to Kansas, shipped them arms, subsides. Jim Lane thundered for the cause of Abolitionism whenever he found a soap-box. John Brown and his fanatical followers screamed for blood in Kansas and finally met their fate at Harper's Ferry.

But these things were vague, distant. In West Point you drilled and studied and when you thought of graduation you visualized a blue uniform. No, not always. Boling of South Carolina had gone home in December. Temple, who had roomed with Donny Fletcher, had gone to Mississippi in January. And then the others—from Georgia and Tennessee, Virginia and Texas. They were wearing the gray, now.

Some day they might be facing each other over guns. A cold shudder ran

through him. Steve was wearing a gray uniform!

CHAPTER III

UNDER TWO FLAGS

IT WAS cooler the next day, with a threat of rain. The Bentons did not make their appearance. After breakfast Donny Fletcher found a deck chair up forward, under the pilot house, and slumped into it. He watched the muddy river water ahead.

After awhile a couple of men clumped along the deck and stopped in front of Donny. He looked up into the bloodshot green eyes of Bill Anderson. The tall Jackson County man had put aside his broadcloth today and was wearing ordinary black trousers, tucked into high leather boots. He still wore a white shirt, but was coatless. A slouch hat was tilted over one side of his head. He had a long black cigar clamped in his jaws.

The man with him was dressed similarly, but was shorter, heavier-set. A clay pipe was stuck in his mouth.

"Saw you with the Bentons last night. They tell you they were Yankees?"

Hot blood throbbed in Donny Fletcher's temples, but he made a tremendous effort to control himself. He said: "The Bentons are my father's neighbors and my friends. I don't care to discuss them."

The heavy-set man took the pipe from his mouth. "This the fella you were tellin' about, Bill? The West Point fella?"

Bill Anderson grinned wickedly. "Uh-huh. Mr. Doniphan Fletcher, of the Jackson County Fletchers."

The other man started to hold out his hand, then looked at it and dropped it at his side. "My name's Polk Webster. I'm from Lees Summit m'self. Know your fam'ly. B'longed to the same militia company with your brother."

"Then why aren't you with—" Donny said, before he caught himself.

Polk Webster nodded, without rancor. "Why ain't I with Price now, huh?" He smacked his lips noisily. "Can't. Gave my word. I was captured in that scrimmage at Boonville and had to take the oath." He turned his eyes upwards, in angelic manner.

Bill Anderson snickered. "He can't never take up arms against the United States on account of he swore an oath."

Donny Fletcher got up from the canvas deck chair. "I've got a book in my carpet-bag. Think I'll read awhile."

He brushed past the two men. He heard one of them laugh when he was a half dozen steps away, but he did not turn around.

In his tiny cabin he lifted one of his carpet bags to the bed and opened it. From under a pile of shirts he took a Navy Colt revolver. He removed the nipples from the cylinder and inserted fresh ones. Then he loaded the gun and tucked it into his belt over his right hip. His long Prince Albert concealed it from casual view.

He went on deck without a book. He circled it once without seeing either Bill Anderson or Polk Webster and concluded that they had retired to the bar. He deliberated having it out with them, now, but finally decided against it.

THE shallow draft *Polar Star* churned its way up the muddy Missouri. It made frequent stops at the river towns. Toward noon they stopped for almost an hour at Jefferson City, the capital vacated only a few weeks before by the Secessionist governor and his repudiated legislature. It was a little sprawling village on the south bank of the river.

Donny Fletcher was having lunch in the dining room when the Bentons finally made their appearance. The major was dressed as he had been the evening before, but Susan was wearing a high-necked dress of black muslin that heightened her fair complexion and hair, by contrast.

Donny rose and invited them to join him at lunch. After they had ordered, Donny said casually, to Mr. Benton: "I had another little brush with Mr. Anderson this morning. I wish you would tell me about him. Is he one of the Andersons I think—"

"The border ruffians? Yes. In fact, he's the leader of them. There are three or four of them and I believe three girls.

This Bill sometimes wears the clothes of a gentleman." Major Benton shook his head. "The stories about the Andersons are probably exaggerated, but they're too persistent to be ignored altogether."

"Donny nodded thoughtfully. The Andersons had an unsavory reputation four years ago, but I thought those things had died down."

"On the contrary, they've increased. Men of the same stripe on the Kansas side, I'm sorry to say, have construed the national condition as an order for the suspension of all law and order. Bands of bushwhackers have sprung up everywhere. A dozen farm houses in the more remote sections of Jackson County have been burned during the last two months. A man named Montgomery and another called Jennison, reputed to be sponsored by Senator Lane, have crossed the line several times—"

Susan Benton interrupted: "What about that ruffian they call Kroger? And that Younger boy from our own vicinity, the son of Thomas Younger—"

"He's gone," Major Benton said, "with the state guard—"

"The state guard is what puzzles me," Donny said. "Sterling Price, although a Southern man, was supposed to be a Unionist. Why, he was a brigadier in the Mexican War. And when he was governor of Missouri—"

"That was several years ago. He didn't commit himself until after the Camp Jackson affair in St. Louis." Major Benton tugged at his beard. "That, I'd say, was a mistake on the part of Frank Blair. I've been with him in most everything, but I believe General Harney's conciliatory attitude was preferable to Lyon's. If Lyon hadn't dispersed the state guard at Camp Jackson, Claiborne Jackson wouldn't have been able to swing the legislature. They voted neutrality earlier in the spring, you know."

"Yes. But with our divided population, it was inevitable. St. Louis, with its fifty thousand Germans, is preponderantly Republican and therefore Union, while out in the western part of the state, seventy-five percent of the people originated in the South."

"There are Germans in the western part of the state. Some even enlisted in the state guard. Of course they didn't know, then, that it was going to become a Rebel organization."

Donny lifted his eyebrows. "You mean there are Union men in the state guard?"

"Hundreds of them, perhaps thirty percent of the total enlistment. They wouldn't dare reveal their true political leanings now, though."

Wearily, Donny shook his head. "I wonder if Steve—"

Susan Benton said: "I'm afraid not. Steve was very outspoken about his convictions. He's Confederate."

"But he's only eighteen!" protested Donny.

"I'm eighteen," said Susan, a trace of a smile on her lips. "You think I'm too young to know my own mind?"

"No, of course not. Still—"

Major Benton coughed loudly. "We'll be at Boonville in an hour. We leave you there, to continue by stagecoach. It's no faster than the steamboat, but we always travel by coach to and from Boonville. We'll no doubt see more of you in Lees Summit."

The trip, as far as Donny Fletcher was concerned, was uneventful after the Bentons left the steamer. At Lexington a troop of blue-uniformed soldiers came aboard and caused a bit of flurry among the passengers. From then on Bill Anderson and his friend Polk Webster remained in their cabins.

It was a tedious trip, taking forty-eight hours for the less than three hundred miles. It was afternoon of the second day when the *Polar Star* finally chugged up to the landing at Kansas City.

Donny was surprised at the growth of the little river town. Four years ago Kansas City had been a sprawling village of fifteen hundred population. Westport Landing, four miles south, had been of more importance. But Kansas City had quadrupled its population. The streets had been straightened and widened and paved with crushed limestone.

Blue uniforms were in evidence everywhere, to Donny's surprise. Kansas City had been the stronghold of the pro-

slavery faction in the old days. But there were still plenty of men of military age in civilian clothes, indicating that President Lincoln's call for volunteers was not receiving too much response out here.

THERE was a hustle about Kansas City that was foreign to this part of Missouri. There were plenty of idlers on the street, but they were outnumbered by workers. Buildings were going up on all sides; wagons were hauling lumber, brick and building materials. The new buildings were mostly of brick, intended for permanancy.

When Donny went to a livery stable, he received the disconcerting information that there wasn't a carriage or horse to be had.

"The army's been buying up horses," the liveryman told him, "them that the state guard and the Kansas men ain't requisitioned." He looked thoughtfully at Donny. "You're from Lees Summit, huh? There's a wagon here going to Westport in a few minutes. Why don't you ride on it to the Landing? Your chances of getting a mount in Westport will be better than here."

So Donny rode to Westport Landing on top of a load of door and window sashes. The driver of the wagon was a tobacco chewing, whiskered man wearing homespun jeans and cotton shirt. His name, he told Donny, was Del Maine.

"But I ain't from there," he added emphatically. "Tennessee's my home state. An' I don't mind sayin', if you wasn't a Southern man yourself, you'd never be ridin' on this here wagon."

"How do you know I'm not a Union soldier?" Donny asked, curtly.

"'Cause I know your pap. Good a Kentucky man as there is in Jackson."

Donny lapsed into silence. His replies to the garrulous Dal Maine were in monosyllables and after awhile the teamster shrugged and gave his full attention to his chewing tobacco and team.

When they reached Westport, Donny climbed down from the wagon. He extended a fifty cent piece to Dal Maine. The latter looked at it and wiped a trickle of brown liquid from his chin. "What's that for?"

"For driving me here. I happen to be a Union soldier."

Dal Maine scowled. "In that case, I'll take the money." He took the coin from Donny's fingers and called: "Hi, boy!" and when a big buck who was putting a sack of feed into a buggy, turned, tossed the half dollar to him.

His lips taut, Donny turned away.

"Massa Donny!" cried a voice. "Massa Donny, fo' de Lawd's sake!"

The big Negro tossed his sack of feed into the buggy, ducked under the heads of Dal Maine's team and came toward Donny.

Donny exclaimed. "Mose!"

He gripped the strapping Negro by an arm and the slave grinned hugely. "Massa Donny, why yo' don't write yo' pappy yo' comin' home?"

"Is that our buggy, Mose?"

"It sho' is. Yo' mammy send Mose all de way to Westport to get some sewin' things, and—"

"Let's go!" cried Donny. "I'm in a hurry to get home."

There was a fine team of geldings hitched to the little buggy and under Donny's driving they trotted swiftly out of Westport.

When they had left the town behind, Donny asked eagerly: "How is everyone?"

"Jes' fine, Massa Donny," replied the slave. "Jes' fine. Yo' pappy was ailin' awhile back, but he gonna be all right now. Yo' mammy, she ain't never been better. Not a day older, hardly, dan when yo' went off to dat soljer school."

"And Stephen—does he write?"

"He sho' do. On'y yesterday he write sayin' dey goin' have big battle wid them Yanks and beat tar out dem."

"How do you know what he wrote?" chuckled Donny. "You can't read."

"Ah got ears, Massa Donny. I c'n hear powerful well. Sometimes when I lay'n under de trees by de cawn patch I c'n hear the cawn growin'."

"As big a liar as ever, Mose."

Mose grinned. "It sho' good to see you home ag'n, Massa Donny. Yo'-all got a shootin' gun wid you?"

"Why, yes, Mose. In my bag. I bought

one of those fine Navy Colts in New York. Why?"

Mose showed his big white teeth, but there was no longer a smile on his face. "'Cause we comin' into de Sni hills now and maybe best to show some shootin' irons. Man try to stop me when I come to Westport, and I drive like de debil to beat him."

"Just a minute, Mose," said Donny. He reached under the seat and opened his carpetbag. A moment later he brought out the Navy Colt he had loaded on the *Polar Star* the day before.

He put the gun on the seat between himself and Mose. "Why would this man try to stop you? Was he from across the line?"

"No suh. Just one of dese yere white trash from de hills. Dey powerful uppity lately. Call dey-self bushwhacker. Dese yere hills are full ob dem."

"Why don't soldiers come down and clear them out?"

Mose stared surprised at the question. "Massa Donny, yo-all hunted here. You know dese yere brush so thick a crow can't even fly t'rough it. Bushwhacker knows every tree. Soldier kain't find dem in twenty years." He caught his breath suddenly and said in a hoarse whisper. "Man dere now. jes' come out. Same fella chase me 'fore."

"Fine," Donny said, harshly. "Perhaps there'll be one bushwhacker less in a minute." He pulled the horses to a walk and he had ample time to study the ruffian by the roadside.

HE WAS an evil looking specimen. Black, unkempt beard, butternut shirt and pants that would have been a discredit to a scarecrow. His hair came halfway to his shoulders, untrammeled by any hat. Yet he carried a surprisingly good carbine, and a Navy Colt the equal of Donny's was stuck in the waistband of his trousers. He slouched at the edge of the narrow road, one shoulder lightly touching a stunted oak tree.

When the horses were almost even with him, the ruffian straightened from his slouch.

"Howdy, mister!" he said.

Donny nodded curtly and would have continued, but somehow the ragged man reached out a hand and the horses stopped. "That black boy of your'n, mister. He needs a good hidin' and I'm the man to do it ef you don't."

"You lay a finger on him and I'll kill you," Donny said savagely.

The ruffian took a step back, but his face showed no alarm. "Name's Fletcher, ain't it? I got a good memory for faces. 'Member you when you was knee-high to a 'coon. I'm Dick Kroger."

"Is that so? There was a Dick Kroger around these parts who was a first rate cut-throat and scoundrel. You wouldn't be him, though."

Dick Kroger's eyes glittered. "Them's hard words, Mister Fletcher."

"I meant them to be," retorted Donny, grimly. "Mose told me that you tried to steal these horses on his way to Westport. I'm warning you, Dick Kroger, don't ever try to take anything belonging to a Fletcher."

Dick Kroger snorted, took another step back and froze. Donny's Navy pistol had leaped into his hand and was covering him.

"Climb down and take his guns away, Mose!" he ordered.

Mose gasped, but jumped to the dusty road. As he went around the team, Dick Kroger said: "Fletcher, if that boy touches me I'll kill him before the week's out."

"Take his guns, Mose," Donny said relentlessly. "Break the carbine across the wheel."

Kroger surrendered his weapons without a struggle, but he winced as the wood of the stock splintered. "Throw the revolver into the woods," Donny went on, "as far as you can!"

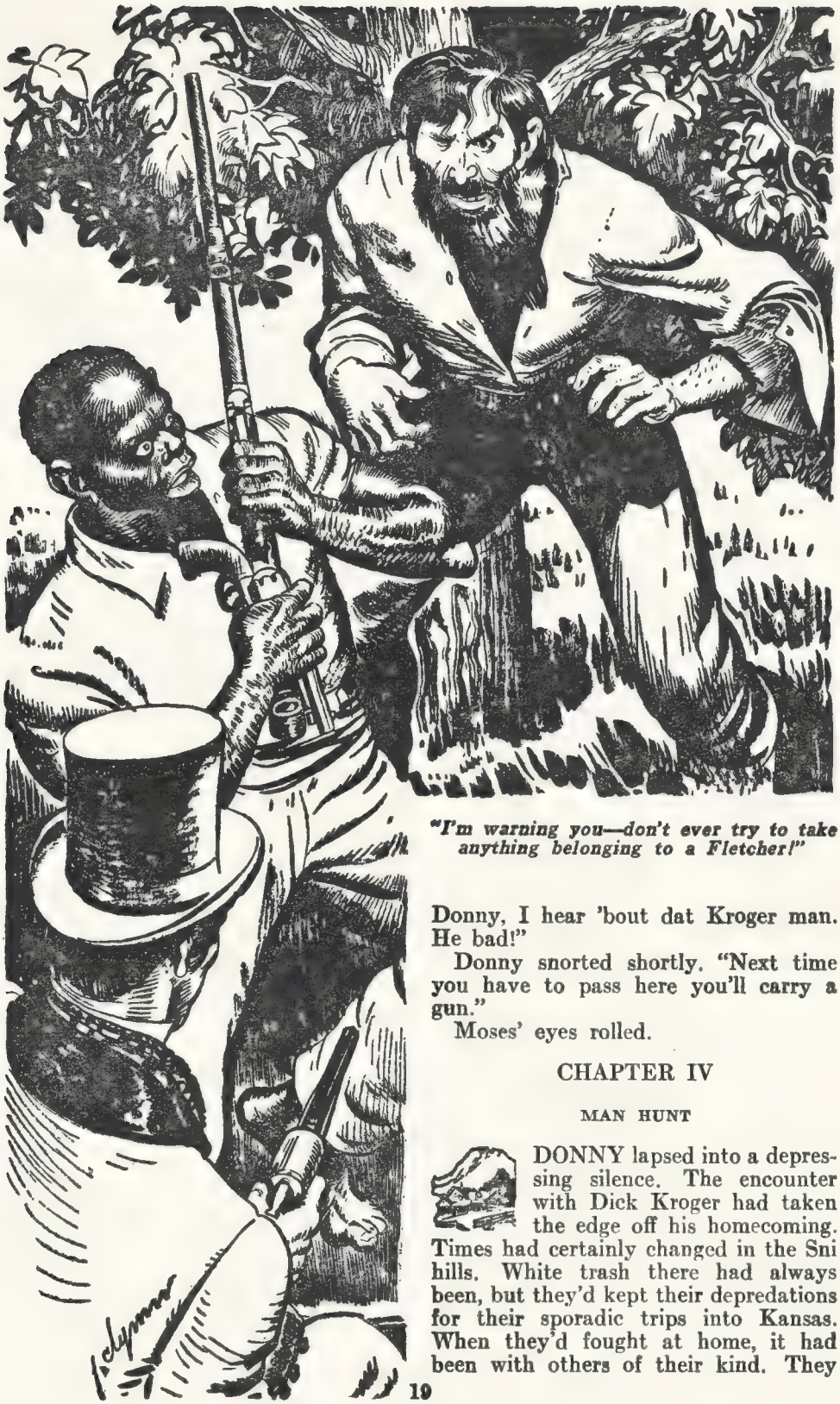
Mose glanced apprehensively at Dick Kroger as his powerful arm drew back to hurl the revolver. The ruffian watched the weapon fly into the thicket and began cursing with liquid fluency.

"I ain't forgettin' this, Fletcher. I ain't never goin' to forget it!"

Mose went around the buggy and climbed in. Donny put down his Navy Colt and picked up the lines. He clucked to the horses and they trotted off.

Dick Kroger's curses followed them.

Beside Donny, Mose shivered. "Massa



"I'm warning you—don't ever try to take anything belonging to a Fletcher!"

Donny, I hear 'bout dat Kroger man. He bad!"

Donny snorted shortly. "Next time you have to pass here you'll carry a gun."

Moses' eyes rolled.

CHAPTER IV

MAN HUNT

DONNY lapsed into a depressing silence. The encounter with Dick Kroger had taken the edge off his homecoming. Times had certainly changed in the Sni hills. White trash there had always been, but they'd kept their depredations for their sporadic trips into Kansas. When they'd fought at home, it had been with others of their kind. They

had never dared to affront the planters.

The team of bays kept up a steady jog and ate up the miles. Ordinarily, Donny would have held them in, but today he was anxious to get home and he let them keep their steady pace, mile after mile.

The sun was still over the trees when he finally turned the team off the road, into the rutted trail in the middle of the large clearing. The fields on both sides of the road were unploughed.

"How come, Mose?" he said, nodding toward the right field.

"Field hand all gone," Mose explained. "Yo' pappy send dem to N'Awleans two-t'ree months ago."

"And we're not raising any crops at all?"

"Naw suh, jes' little patch cawn and li'l truck garden fo' yo' mammy."

The team, knowing it was nearing home, broke into a gallop. The buggy crested a little knoll and there it was then, the two story brick house, with the wide veranda in front, supported by tall white pillars. Donny Fletcher's home.

"Giddyap!" cried Mose to the horses and they swept around the circular drive to the front of the house.

A tall, slightly stooped man with a gray mustache and goatee looked up idly from his seat on the veranda. Then he came suddenly to his feet.

"Doniphan!"

"Father!" Donny tossed the lines to the grinning Mose and leaped to the ground. He took several quick strides and gripped his father's hand. A woman who had heard the exchange of greetings came running out of the house.

"Donny!"

"Mother!"

Ellen Fletcher was forty-five and looked thirty-five. She was a little above medium height, slender in her maturity, yet with a superb figure. Her hair was straight and dark, parted in the center and coiled in a long knot upon the back of her head.

She trembled in Donny's tight embrace and cried a little: "It's been so long, Donny!"

Fat, waddling, aging Mammy Lou came out of the house. She had practically raised Ellen Fletcher, who had been Ellen Stuart. She had been Donny's mammy and he was not ashamed to hug her, now.

They made much of him, fired excited questions at him, which he answered just as excitedly. But inevitably, came the moment when the other things had to come. By that time, they'd had supper and the Fletchers were alone on the veranda, Donny's mother in a wicker chair and the men nearby on a bench.

Louis Fletcher, with an uneasy glance at his wife, fired the opening shot. "We had a letter from Stephen yesterday, He's been made a sergeant."

Donny looked at his father, then at his mother and finally back at his father. He took a deep breath.

"I guess there's no use beating about the bush, father. I saw the Battle of Bull Run. The South has an army and it's not going to be a quick thing. It'll last two years, perhaps more. I can't stay out of it."

"Your father and I have talked about it, naturally," Ellen Fletcher said calmly. "You've been at the military academy. You're a trained soldier."

"Yes," said Donny. "And my orders may come tomorrow."

"Orders," said Louis Fletcher. "Didn't you come straight from Washington?"

Donny's eyes dropped to the flagstones of the veranda. "I did. And my orders are coming—from Washington."

He heard his mother inhale sharply, but did not look up. His father, so close to him, did not seem to breathe.

Donny lifted his gaze to his father's. "You obtained the congressional appointment for me, father. The United States gave me a university education and paid me."

"But Donny—"

"Yes, father?"

"We're from Kentucky. We've been slave-holders since before the Revolution."

Donny risked a glance at his mother, saw her face white and still. The evening seemed suddenly cool to Donny. He said, a little desperately: "It wasn't just West Point, father. I—I think I felt this way even before."

Louis Fletcher nodded slowly. "I think

I knew. Certainly I sensed it these last few months. Your letters—there was a note to them—"

Donny lifted his head miserably. "What shall I do?"

His father cleared his throat. "Why, you'll do what *you* believe is right."

"Would it be easier if I didn't stay?"

"Donny!" exclaimed his mother.

Louis Fletcher said, "This is your home, the same as it is Stephen's. Naturally, you'll stay here. Although—"

"Yes, father?"

"Nothing."

"I think I know what you were about to say—that I shouldn't express myself hereabouts. Jackson County's Southern, I know."

Louis Fletcher shook his head slowly. "The border's in a state of unrest. It isn't wise for *any* man to express himself openly these days. Some pretty terrible things have been happening around here. Bushwhackers—"

"I had an encounter with one this afternoon. Dick Kroger, he said his name was."

His mother's eyes widened.

Donny said quickly: "It didn't amount to anything, really. But, look, father, I encountered neighbors of ours on the *Polar Star,* coming up from St. Louis. The Bentons."

Ellen Fletcher's eyes lit up. "Susan? What did you think of her? Isn't she a charming girl?"

"Very!" Donny said, then flushed a little because of the enthusiasm in his tone. He added, quickly, "I had quite a long visit with Major Benton. He didn't exactly tell me what his business was, but I gathered that he's rather a substantial person."

"That's putting it mildly," smiled Louis Fletcher. "Major Benton is our richest man. He owns the bank in Lees Summit, a stage line running clear to Boonville—"

"So that's why they left the boat there!"

". . . And he owns considerable farm land hereabouts," continued Louis Fletcher. "Some of it is close by ours."

"Susan has been such a comfort to me," put in Ellen Fletcher. "I declare she's visited me almost every day. Stephen thought so much of her."

"She made some mention of him," Donny said. "They're just about the same age, aren't they?"

"I believe Susan is a couple of months younger. She's grown up in the three years they've been here. I declare, she was just a half grown child when they first came, all legs—"

Mose came around the edge of the house.

"Massa Fletcher," he said, "dem two mares we done had in the south pasture —dey's gone."

Louis Fletcher rose quickly. "Gone?

MR. WRIGHT FOUND OUT HE WAS WRONG!
MR. WRIGHT: Gee, this stuff is awful! Why do all laxatives taste so bad?
MRS. WRIGHT: All of them don't. Ex-Lax tastes like delicious chocolate.
MR. W.: Ex-Lax? That's O.K. for you and Junior, but I need something stronger!
MRS. W.: No, you don't! Ex-Lax is just as effective as any bad-tasting cathartic.
LATER
MR. W.: I sure am glad I took your advice. It's Ex-Lax for me from now on.
MRS. W.: Yes, with Ex-Lax in the house we don't need any other laxative!
The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet *gentle!* No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax the next time you need a laxative. It's good for *every* member of the family.
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You mean they've broken the fence?"

"Fence broken," said Mose, "but busted wid de ax. Mares gone, dat's sho'."

"Those miserable Barretts!" exclaimed Louis Fletcher. "I'll run them off the place tomorrow."

"Who are the Barretts, father?"

"Trash. But they're the best I could get. Since I sold the hands I've had to employ local white labor. I paid these Barrett boys a dollar a day. They've stolen at least that much more. And now—they'll answer for those horses, though!"

DONNY slept that night in the cool room with the cross ventilation. He heard again the crickets, felt the smooth sheets and soft mattress under him. But it was long before he went to sleep.

The next morning he looked through his clothes. It wouldn't be advisable to wear the gray suit, today. Yet he had no other. But in the closet was a pair of blue denim trousers. He held them up before him and whistled. "The kid's grown. Must be my height." He put on the trousers. They fitted. He found a shirt then, but was compelled to put on the new black officer's riding boots he had bought in New York, while on his way to Washington.

Then he went downstairs—and almost collided with Susan Benton, who was just coming into the house from the veranda.

"Welcome home!" she exclaimed.

"Miss Benton! This is a pleasure. I missed you on the boat."

"And I came over early to apologize. It was father's fault. He never thought to tell you our reason for leaving the *Polar Star* at Boonville. It was just to save a dollar by finishing the journey on his own stage. Father's very economical!"

"But *you* should have told me. I would have been glad to—to patronize home industry."

She made a funny little curtsey. "Thank you, sir, but it wouldn't have been proper for a young lady to invite you to travel with her."

Donny grinned. "Mother said: 'why, three years ago she was a half grown girl, all legs'—"

"Limbs, Mr. Fletcher! And you're not so much older yourself, even if you are an officer."

Ellen Fletcher came out of the kitchen. "Susan! You're just in time for breakfast."

"I had breakfast almost an hour ago. We eat early at our place. But—" She glanced teasingly at Donny—"since I'm a growing girl a second breakfast wouldn't hurt me at all."

Donny's father was not at breakfast. His mother explained that he'd had to ride to Lees Summit on a business matter. Donny guessed that it had to do with the missing mares, but made no comment.

Breakfast was an enjoyable affair, with Susan Benton and Donny carrying on an animated give-and-take conversation in which Ellen Fletcher joined frequently. Donny detected a warm look in his mother's eyes before the meal was half finished.

After breakfast, Susan took her leave. Mose brought around a black filly with a side saddle and Donny helped her up. Looking down at him, she said: "You're dressed as if you intend to work. But if the heat should get too much for you in the middle of the afternoon and you could use a cold drink. . . ."

"I'll come riding to your place, where it'll be in a tall glass, with crushed ice surrounding it and a spray of mint inside."

LATER, Donny took a turn about the farm. The little whitewashed slave cabins stood open, but grass was already growing high about the doors. The stables and the barns showed neglect, and the little corn patch behind the slave cabins had a meager, scrawny growth. The farm certainly needed work, he thought, and a feeling of sadness came over him. He remembered the place as it had been four years ago. when there had been more than twenty slaves here, singing, happy Negroes.

He caught himself.

"We'll get by," he said, half aloud.

But he was glad a little later when he

saw his father ride up to the mansion on a huge sorrel. He dismounted heavily and Donny saw that his face was grim.

"I guess our mares are gone for good," he said. "Bushwhackers burned the house of Jacob Shickel last night.. Ran off his livestock, too. It's apparent that those good-for-nothing Barretts have turned bushwhackers. We'll see no more of the mares."

"If they're the same Barretts I'm thinking of, father, they're mere boys. Why, I remember them as about eight or ten."

"Oh, they're probably fifteen and sixteen now. They're old enough. Most of these bushwhackers are mere boys. There've been rumors about those Younger boys for a year or two, and the oldest can't be more than sixteen or seventeen now."

"You mean Cole Younger?" exclaimed Donny. "Why, they're not—"

Louis Fletcher grunted. "Family's one of the best in the state. I know their father well. Union man, by the way, even though he owns slaves. Oh, I almost forgot, there's a letter from Stephen."

Ellen Fletcher heard the last as she opened the door. She came out, flying. "Let me see it!"

Louis Fletcher brought an envelope from his pocket. Donny took it and gave it to his mother. She opened it eagerly and read, aloud:

"Dear Parents:

I take my pen in hand to write a few lines. I am well and have gained five pounds. We have plenty to eat, because our foragers have been very good.

General McCulloch has joined us with 7,000 Texas and Arkansas troops. . . ."

Ellen Fletcher broke off suddenly. Her eyes went to Donny. Donny winced: "I know—military information. But Steve's my brother. What he tells me in a personal letter. . . ."

"Of course, Donny. I'm sorry. That was stupid of me." She continued with the letter. Steve said the combined forces of Price and McCulloch numbered over twenty thousand and they were sure that the Yankee army in Springfield wasn't any stronger than that. They were expecting to meet them, and after they had dispersed them, the army would march north. He expected to see them all within two or three weeks.

THERE was not a word about Donny, no questions as to whether he had returned from his four years in the East. The omission was signficant, and when his mother finished reading the letter, Donny turned to take another walk in the fields. Before he reached the edge of the mansion, however, he stopped.

A sharp report had come to his ears. Then he heard another, a duller, deeper boom. He turned quickly and saw his father already springing toward the door.

"Wait, father!" Donny cried.

He rushed to the house, tore open the door and took the stairs to his room, three at a time. His carpet-bag was open and he tore out the Navy Colt.

He went down the stairs faster than he had ascended them, but when he got out of the house, his father was already astride the sorrel, galloping toward the fields.

Donny ran after him, his heavy cavalry boots not hindering his speed. When he was still two hundred yards from the edge of the woods, his father had halted his horse and was on his knees beside a huddled body.

It was Mose. Donny saw that before he came pounding up. And by that time Louis Fletcher was straightening. a terrible look on his face.

"He's dead!" he said, dully.

"There were two," Donny said. "The first shot was from a revolver, the second a carbine. Let me have your horse, father."

"No," said Louis Fletcher. "They have the advantage. There are two and they know the woods."

"You've forgotten—I know every tree within five miles."

"They may have friends nearby. At any rate, you can't trail them through those hills without dogs. If you wish, ride over to Justin Tate's, up the road. He has some hounds. And I imagine he'll want to come along with his sons. In the meantime, I'll get the Sagers and

the Wattersons. Phil Watterson is a deputy sheriff."

Precious time could be lost arguing. Donny turned and ran back to the slave cabins. Adjoining was a little pole corral in which a couple of sleek horses grazed. Donny caught up a bridle from the top pole of the corral, dropped the pole to the ground and vaulted into the corral.

He caught one of the horses, slipped the bridle into its mouth and swung easily onto the animal's back. Bareback, he took the animal over the hurdle where the pole was down. A moment later he was galloping past the brick mansion toward the main road, a quarter mile away.

He passed the Benton house on his way to the Tate farm and had a fleeting glimpse of an imposing house, larger even than the Fletcher mansion. Justin Tate lived two miles beyond and Donny did not spare his mount.

Fortunately, Justin Tate, a lean man six feet, five inches tall, was feeding his hounds in the back yard when Donny pounded up.

"Why, Donny Fletcher—" he began, but Donny cut him off.

"Mr. Tate, some bushwhackers have killed Mose and father wants to borrow your hounds."

"Bushwhackers!" Justin Tate put two fingers to his mouth and blew a piercing blast. Two younger Tates, not much shorter than their father, came running from different directions.

"Lester! Henry! Saddle horses. And fetch the best guns. We're goin' huntin' for big game!"

He moved swiftly himself then, gathering leashes for the dogs, dappled, long-eared beasts.

They were at the Fletcher farm in ten minutes, but Louis Fletcher had already returned from his own errand, with three heavily armed men.

"Phil Watterson wasn't home. But there's enough of us without him. Here's an old shirt one of the Barretts wore."

"You think it was them?"

"I'm thinkin' we'll find them at the end of this trail."

Justin Tate thrust the shirt separately under the muzzles of the half dozen hounds, then took off their leashes. Instantly the dogs began baying and dashed about. In less than a minute, their voices were raised in unison and they tore off for the woods.

The men clambered into saddles and took after them.

IT WAS a wild ride. The forest was almost impenetrable for horsemen, although the dogs could dart readily through the underbrush. Their baying grew fainter and fainter and if it hadn't been that they were delayed at a small stream a couple of miles from the start, they might have lost the riders.

By the time the posse reached the water, the dogs just managed to pick up the trail on the far side, a hundred yards downstream. The horses splashed across the water and for a time the underbrush was fairly thin and they made better time.

Justin Tate, because he owned the dogs, rode in the lead. One of his sons, the older one, named Lester, rode behind him and after him, Donny Fletcher. Donny's father was next and the others strung out behind.

It wasn't until after they had crossed the water that Donny's cold anger left him and he began to think more clearly of what was impending. These men were all Southerners. They did not often appeal to the law for aid. Most of them had been in this country before there had been any law.

There was one thing you couldn't do to these men—coerce their slaves to run away or kidnap them. Their wealth was counted in slaves. A Negro like Mose, in the full prime of his life, was worth fifteen hundred dollars. Yet it wasn't the money. During the hectic years of embittered clashing with the free-state North, certain laws had come into being. Kidnaping a white person might be punishable with six months in prison. Kidnaping a slave meant death —by legal execution, if the offender lived that long, which was unlikely.

But Danny Fletcher was an officer in the United States Army.

A gun thundered in the thicket ahead and a dog yipped in pain. The rapid fire of a revolver burst out then and

"We've got them! Spread out, men!"

there was more yelping on the part of the hounds.

"We've got them!" cried Louis Fletcher. "Spread out, men!"

Justin Tate and his son Lester gave way surprisingly quick and Donny suddenly found himself in the lead. Behind him, the possemen were spreading out.

A wild figure appeared fifty feet away, carbine raised. The Navy Colt bucked against Donny's palm and the carbine fell from the man's grasp.

A cry of awful rage and hate tore from a throat and another man sprang from behind a tree. There was a revolver in each hand.

The right hand gun belched a puff of smoke and a bullet tugged at Donny's shirt sleeve. Another struck his horse and the animal screamed and plunged up on its hind legs. Somewhere behind Donny a gun thundered, but the bushwhacker ahead was still blazing away.

Donny slipped back off the horse's rump, hit the ground and plunged to one side on his knees. As he landed his Navy Colt straightened automatically before him; without even knowing he fired, the gun bucked again in his palm. The bushwhacker pitched to the ground.

Louis Fletcher, leaning down from his horse, helped Donny to his feet.

"Straight shooting, son," he said.

They were both dead. But they weren't the Barretts. The first one, the man who had carried the carbine, was Dick Kroger. Justin Tate identified the second.

"Yancey Caseldine. Now maybe we can raise shotes again."

"I had a brush with Kroger yesterday," Donny said. "It was over Mose. He threatened to kill him—" He stopped and plunged suddenly into the brush at one side. He was violently sick.

These were the first men he had ever killed.

CHAPTER V

DEATH IN THE DAWN

THEY buried Mose that afternoon. Donny and his father dug the grave, draped the black form in a quilt and deposited it gently into the cold ground. They shoveled earth over the body and Donny could scarcely see it because of the mist in his eyes.

Louis Fletcher was silent through it all, but when they put away their tools he said to Donny: "If I'd sent him to New Orleans with the others, he'd still be alive."

"I think he'd have preferred it this way," Donny said. "He'd have brooded the rest of his life if he'd once stood on an auction block."

Louis Fletcher looked oddly at Donny. Then he nodded. "Perhaps you're right!"

Donny took off his brother's trousers and shirt in the afternoon and donned again his suit of gray.

When he came outside, his father was on the veranda with a stout, black-bearded man.

"Donny, you remember Mr. Watterson?" his father said.

"Of course. It's good to see you again, sir."

Phil Watterson extended a moist hand. "Howdy, Donny. We've just been talking about you."

Donny caught the frown on his father's forehead before it was erased. "You mean—about this morning?"

"I'm sorry, Donny," Louis Fletcher said, "but the story's already around Lees Summit. Someone talked more'n he should."

"It was that Dutchman, Cretzmeyer," exclaimed Phil Watterson angrily. "You shouldn't a let him go along, knowing his party lines."

"He was visiting Jim Sager," Louis Fletcher frowned.

"Does it matter?" Donny asked. "Mose was murdered and we tracked down the killers. They opened fire on us."

"Sure, sure," said Watterson, "I'm not sayin' anything. I'd done the same m'self. Only, I thought, I'd stop over and tell you what's buzzin' around town. You see, this Caseldine—well, he only yesterday enlisted in the Yankee army. Of course you know how *we* feel about that—"

"What Mr. Watterson means, Donny," Louis Fletcher cut in, "is that al-

though Southerners hereabouts are in the majority, there are Union troops stationed at Lees Summit."

"What I mean," said Phil Watterson, "is that the sheriff's got a warrant for your arrest. He's holdin' it up until tomorrow morning."

"Why didn't you bring it out with you? You're the sheriff's deputy, aren't you?"

Phil Watterson's forehead creased. He looked at Louis Fletcher. The latter said: "That's it, Donny. Phil doesn't want to serve that warrant. And neither does the sheriff. But they'll have to."

"I understand that. But I don't think it'll be so serious. In view of the circumstances, I'm sure the court will—"

"No," said Donny's father curtly. "It won't be a civil court. Caseldine was a *soldier.*"

Donny caught his breath. "I see. And I think I know what you mean."

Phil Watterson said quickly: "Your dad told me about you. I brought out a letter for you, too. Came into the post-office just as I was leavin'. Abe Colton gave it to me—said it looked important."

Louis Fletcher took a long envelope from his pocket. "It's from the War Department, Donny."

"My orders!"

He broke the seal and took out an official looking letter. His pulses pounded and his breath came heavily. He looked up and Phil Watterson said hastily, "I'll be goin' now. Good-by, Donny, and good luck."

"Thank you, Mr. Watterson. I want you to know that I appreciate what you're doing."

"That goes for me, too, Phil," Louis Fletcher said.

Phil Watterson walked to his horse, mounted and put the spurs to the animal's flank. Louis Fletcher said, to Donny: "He's a good friend. He didn't want to know what your orders were, in view of the fact that his sympathies are Confederate—"

"I know, father," Donny said. He extended the document from Washington. "In view of my record at the academy, I've been made a captain. It's almost unheard of."

"There's a dearth of officers," Louis Fletcher said. He looked at the order Donny had given him and his mouth became tight. "It says here that you're to report at once, to General Lyon, at Rolla."

Donny caught the significance of his father's tone. "In the meantime, General Lyon has moved to Springfield. And Steve's down there."

Louis Fletcher gripped Donny's arm. He smiled wanly, but said nothing, until they had turned to enter the house. He said softly: "Perhaps, it would be best not to tell your mother where you're going."

Donny nodded, his face a little drawn.

Ellen Fletcher received the news of Donny's departure without any outward perturbation. Yet Donny knew how she felt.

She said: "How long have you got?"

Thinking of Phil Watterson, Donny replied, "No time at all. I've got to leave now."

This time Ellen Fletcher could not prevent her eyes from misting. "So soon, Donny?" Then, "You'll have time to ride over to the Bentons?"

He nodded.

A little later he mounted a gelding and rode the half mile to Major Benton's mansion. Susan Benton, in a cool, white dress, got up from a chair on the veranda. She looked at his face and said:

"Something's happened?"

"I've got my orders."

Her blue eyes were sober. Donny would remember them that way for a long time. He said: "I wish I could have had more time, just a little more."

Her gaze remained steady. "I wish so, too."

"Good-by, Susan."

"Good-by—Donny!"

In his room, at home, Donny's mother had laid out his blue uniform on the bed. Donny would not have put it on until later, but the intimation was clear. He was the son of Ellen and Louis Fletcher. If he chose to wear a blue uniform instead of gray, he was still their son, and this was his home.

He put it on. He put his Navy Colt in its holster and descended the stairs.

His departure was strained but quiet. He had known it would be.

"Take the gelding, Donny," his father said. "He's a good horse."

And then, in a few minutes, he turned in his saddle on the crest between the house and the road. He looked back at the brick mansion and a shiver ran through him. Perhaps. . . .

ROLLA was 150 miles from Kansas City, yet the easiest way to reach it was to go by steamboat, 300 miles, to St. Louis, then 100 miles by train to Rolla, the southwest terminal of the railroad. Such a trip consumed the better part of a week, but it could be traveled in comfort and ease.

Donny Fletcher chose the shorter, more rigorous journey, which took only two and a half days. He traveled by steamer to Jefferson City, then cut across country to Rolla.

It was hostile territory through which he passed, but the Union Army was in control, and Donny's blue uniform earned him no more than occasional sullen glances. From Jefferson City to Rolla, the Federal patrols were numerous.

Rolla had been established by General Lyon as a base early in his campaign against Sterling Price. Then Fremont had superseded Lyon in command of the Western department, with headquarters in St. Louis.

Lyon remained in the field, in imminent danger from the vastly superior enemy near Springfield, a hundred miles southwest of Rolla. He sent frantic requests to Fremont for reinforcements, ammunition, supplies. But Fremont, in St. Louis, had only just taken over the command of the department and he was being besieged by representatives of the press, by politicians and civilians, patronage seekers, and the horde of private citizens who had some service or commodity to sell, a favor or appointment to wheedle or purchase. On a smaller scale it was like Washington. There it had been partly responsible for the defeat of the Union Army at Bull Run. And in Missouri it contributed to the tragedy that occurred near Springfield.

Faced by a united foe who outnumbered him four to one, the fiery Nathaniel Lyon was faced by two alternatives —one, to retreat to Rolla, the other to strike a quick, surprise blow at the enemy, who seemed apathetic despite its superior strength.

The first of these alternatives meant that Lyon would sacrifice Southwest Missouri to the enemy, leaving thousands of pro-Union citizens to the mercy of the foe. In addition, the North would present the important Granby lead mines to an enemy who needed them sorely.

A retreat at this stage of the war would indicate a weakness to the Missouri population in general—many of whom were still undecided as to which side to toss their lot.

Retreat was repugnant to Lyon. He sent frantic messages to Fremont in St. Louis, and when the response did not come and the big bear to the south of him began to rumble, he suddenly marched his army south of Springfield and on August 10, at Wilson's Creek, made a vicious attack, with the main body of his men—thirty-five hundred against twenty thousand. In the meantime a brigade of Germans, under Colonel Sigel, who had begged to try an independent flanking movement, marched around the enemy and struck him from the rear.

Lyon's small force, surprisingly, rolled back the enemy. For a while it seemed the vastly inferior Union force would drive the Southern host from the field. But then the left wing of General McCulloch's force, composed largely of Texans and a battalion of Indian allies, by the ruse of flying a Union flag, destroyed Colonel Sigel's command.

The odds were then six to one, yet Lyon hurled his regiments repeatedly against the disloyal state guards of Sterling Price and the Southern army of Ben McCulloch.

At last the sheer weight of numbers told against Lyon's force. After six hours of battle the dour Lyon, already wounded, said sadly to his unit commanders: "I fear my day is lost."

A few minutes later a Rebel bullet struck him dead.

It was retreat then. Not rout, but orderly retreat. Yet, had the Rebel force pressed its advantage then it could have forced the surrender of the entire Union army.

The Confederate victory, however, had cost dearly. For the number of men engaged, the casualties at Wilson's Creek were greater than at Bull Run—greater than they were to be in any battle of the war, with the possible exception of Gettysburg.

It was the first major engagement in the West, the second of the entire war. And it had been fought in Missouri, the state that had wanted to be neutral.

DONNY FLETCHER reached Rolla from the north as the vanguard of the defeated Union army approached Rolla from the south. He found the headquarters of the army in a two-story brick building on a hill overlooking the town. He introduced himself to an orderly, then cooled his heels on a bench for fifteen minutes before being shown into a room.

An officer wearing the insignia of a captain of ordnance scowled at Donny.

"I'm Captain Lutz," he said. "You're Captain Fletcher?"

"Yes, sir," Donny replied.

"And you just graduated from West Point?"

Donny was puzzled by the hostility in the officer's tone. He nodded curtly.

"That's fine," the ordnance officer continued. "Often wished I had friends in politics myself."

Donny stiffened. "I'm sorry, but I don't happen to have any political friends. I won the appointment to West Point in a competitive test."

"I can imagine," Captain Lutz said, his lips twisted into a sneer. "I was a second lieutenant for four years and a first for seven. And you're out of the Point six weeks and have already reached my rank."

A retort leaped to Donny's lips, but he forced it back and remained silent. Captain Lutz looked sharply at Donny and seemed disappointed when he did not take up the challenge. He grunted.

"All right, you're too late to save Lyon, so find yourself quarters somewhere. You'll hear from us in due course of time. Advise the clerk outside of your residence."

Seething inwardly, Donny saluted and left. If this was a sample of his pettiness and inefficiency it was no wonder that Captain Lutz had remained a lieutenant for so many years. Being an ordnance officer he was a noncombatant, and it was quite probable that his promotion would be slow even in these times, when second lieutenants became captains and captain colonels.

He set out to find lodgings and after an hour's search obtained a room no larger than a closet in a clap-trap hotel that had been raised hastily at the south end of town. He returned to headquarters and left his new address with the orderly clerk.

Mud was ankle deep on the streets of Rolla. Cavalrymen galloped their horses through the stuff and splattered foot soldiers, who cursed the cavalrymen with uninhibited fluency.

Infantrymen clumped up and down the wooden sidewalks and greeted other infantrymen with cheerful taunts: "Hello, Ohio! Thought you'd be back in Cleveland by this time."

"Hi, Wisconsin. Your shoes are worn out from running!"

Donny Fletcher pushed open the door of a large saloon and found the place packed with soldiers of all ranks and branches of service.

A mixed quartet composed of two infantrymen, an artilleryman and a cavalryman were howling the mournful words of "John Brown's Body." At the bar an infantry corporal was buying a youthful lieutenant a drink and a captain of artillery had his arm about the shoulders of a sergeant and with tears in his eyes was telling him of his wife and children in Minnesota.

Imbued with the military caste system, Donny was appalled by the fraternizing of officers and enlisted men, but after he examined the insignia of several soldiers and saw that they were militia he made grudging allowance.

Yet, he was somewhat disconcerted when a militia major looked him over and introduced himself in a Teutonic

accent. "I'm Major Weisbecker. Would you do me the honor of having a glass of lager with me?"

At West Point Donny had learned that a lieutenant does not "honor" a major. But he said:

"Of course, sir, and I'd be grateful if you'd give me the news. I've only arrived in Rolla from the north."

"The north? Then you were not at Springfield? *Ach,* you have missed something." The major shuddered. "It was frightful. We make charge after charge; we drive them back and back and always they return and there are more of them. It was terrible. Our losses—I do not know, but twenty-five percent, at least—"

"Twenty-five percent!" gasped Donny. "Why, ten percent is high for the average battle."

"*Ja,* so I have always been told, but in this battle, brrr!"

Raw troops, twenty-five percent losses. Donny sipped at the glass of beer the major had bought for him and pondered this hate that made men fight so fiercely, men who were of the same general stock, neighbors. And for what were they fighting? Their lives, homes? No, they had not been threatened.

A CORPORAL wearing sidearms came into the saloon. With him were two privates, carrying rifles. The corporal looked around the saloon, frowned, then saluted an officer and spoke to him in a low tone. The officer's face showed astonishment; then he turned and called out, loudly:

"Gentlemen, is there a Captain Doniphan Fletcher in the room?"

Donny straightened. "That's me!"

The corporal spoke to his escort and the trio came across the saloon. They stopped and came to attention before Donny. The corporal said:

"You're wanted at headquarters, sir!"

Donny's eyes narrowed. "Very well, but why the escort?"

"Orders, sir!"

Some of the officers were looking on, puzzled. Donny reddened.

"Let's go," he snapped, curtly.

He strode out of the saloon ahead of the escort. The detail fell in behind him, walking smartly. Donny refused to look back at them until he reached the headquarters building. Then, finally, he whirled and snapped: "Who wants to see me?"

"Captain Lutz, sir, the provost marshal!"

Donny stormed into the building and the escort still followed. A moment later he slammed open the door of Captain Lutz's office.

"What is this, Captain?" he demanded, sharply.

Captain Lutz bared his teeth. "Right after you left I looked through some papers that had come in and which I'd not had time to examine previously. They came from Lees Summit, Missouri, which I understand is your home."

"That's right. What of it?"

"Nothing of it," Captain Lutz retorted. "Except that Colonel Teeples of the 47th Kansas Infantry has preferred charges against you. Serious charges. Murdering a United States soldier."

A dum-dum bullet seemed to explode in Donny Fletcher's vitals. A gasp was torn from his throat. "I did kill a man near Lees Summit. He was a contemptible ruffian who had just stolen some of my father's horses and climaxed that by shooting down my father's servant, in cold blood."

Captain Lutz picked up some papers from his desk and tapped them. "It says here that your father is a slave-holder, that you have a brother even now in the Confederate army. Is that right?"

"It is, but that has nothing to do with me. I am a graduate of West Point."

"So is Robert E. Lee. Also Jefferson Davis and Beauregard. . . ."

Donny's eyes slitted. "What are you driving at, Captain Lutz?"

Captain Lutz suddenly slammed back his chair and rose to his feet. "Just this—you're under arrest. The charge is treason and murder and you will face a court-martial. Corporal, take his sidearms and escort him to the guardhouse!"

Donny was suddenly as cool as crushed ice. He said: "You're making a mistake, Captain Lutz. There were half a dozen men with me when that affair took place. They'll swear—"

"Swear, hell!" snarled Captain Lutz. "I've got the names of every one of them, and their records. They're all Rebels and their testimony won't even be allowed in the court-martial! Take him away, Corporal!"

THE guardhouse was a one-room log cabin, ten by fourteen feet. It contained one window which was secured against escape by criss-crossed straps of iron. There was no furniture of any kind in the place. A prisoner was allowed one blanket, which he spread out on the hard packed earthen floor.

About twenty men were in the guardhouse. They were the rag-tag of the army, deserters, looters, incorrigibles. They played cards incessantly, bickered continuously among themselves and occasionally united to harass Donny Fletcher, the only officer present.

According to regulations Donny should not have been confined with enlisted men, but these were exceptional times. The other prisoners persisted in calling Donny a Confederate and their malicious thrusts were based on that premise.

"Price just shot three Union Prisoners at Osceola," one of them would say, "I hear Fremont's issued an order to shoot six Confederates in return. Reckon you'll be one of the six, Fletcher?"

The jibe was not without justification. Reports of Price's activities came into the guardhouse every day. Sentries spoke to the prisoners through the barred window, sold them newspapers at ridiculously high prices.

Price was moving north through the western counties, sweeping everything before him. The Unionists were suffering at the hands of his ruthless army. Most of Price's state guard had been recruited in the territory through which they were now passing, and there wasn't a farmer or settler in the section whose political views were not known to some man in Price's army. Price's commissary and supply train was negligible. The army lived off the country through which it passed and the foragers who were thrown out on both sides of the advance were devastatingly successful.

A party would descend upon a farm. "You're a good Southern man," the leader would say. "Well, the Confederate Army needs them beeves. Here's scrip in payment. Send it to Jeff Davis. He'll pay you, when he gets around to it."

If the farmer protested, the foragers became truculent: "So, you're a damn Yank, huh? Well, in that case we want —without the scrip!"

Here and there a frightened farmer would make no protest at all. A Price soldier who had come from around here, and perhaps bore the farmer an old grudge, would whisper to the others and in a few minutes the house and barns would go up in smoke. A Unionist!

As Price's army moved northward it increased in strength. Southerners who had held off before enlisted now. Some, whose sympathies had been on the borderline, toppled to the Southern side by the sight of a victorious army. And there were others—many of them—who merely tagged along with the army. Border ruffians, scavengers, looking for loot; bushwhackers, who had never owner a slave in their entire lives, but who found this opportunity too good to pass up. Overnight, they became "Confederates."

There was no Union force strong enough to oppose Price, none in sight. Fremont, in St. Louis, aroused suddenly to the dire peril, sent telegrams to McClellan in the east, to Secretary of War Stanton, to President Lincoln.

"I need troops, supplies, guns! Delay will be fatal!"

Regiments were sent him from Illinois and Iowa; Kansas offered volunteers. Fremont made feverish campaign plans, then let them lag for days. Colonel Mulligan, with 1,200 men and huge army stores in Lexington, wired frantically that Price was marching on him and he could not be expected to resist with his small force. Neither could Lexington fall into Price's hands. It was too important strategically. It dominated Northwest Missouri, could be used as a base for punitive expeditions into Kansas, where the Free-Staters could expect no mercy from the Missourians, who hated Kansans more than any other people.

WHILE all this was happening, Donny Fletcher remained in the guardhouse at Rolla. Nine long days and nights, during which he was ignored entirely by those outside. Several times he tried sending messages to the provost marshal, to the commanding officer of the camp, but the sentries took the messages—and Donny's bribes—and nothing happened.

And then, on the tenth morning, a stern-eyed captain of infantry came into the guardhouse.

"I'm Captain Vance," he told Donny crisply. "I've been assigned to act as your counsel. You go before the court martial in a half hour."

"But my witnesses!" Donny cried. "I haven't been permitted to get in touch with them. . . ."

"Jackson County is in the hands of the enemy," Captain Vance replied. "And as your counsel I advise you not to even mention them. Captain Lutz has informed me that your witnesses are definitely pro-Southern."

"But how can I make a defense without witnesses?"

"Don't make a defense. Admit your guilt and make a plea for mercy. It's your only chance. At least two of the officers on the court-martial board are from the western counties. One comes from Kansas."

Donny Fletcher stared in amazement at Captain Vance. "And *they're* going to try me?"

Captain Vance nodded grimly.

"You're young and you make a good appearance. Your record at The Point is good. We'll bear down on that. We'll plead extenuating circumstances—self-defense. We may get away with it."

Later, when Donny entered the court-martial room and looked at the grim faces of the five officers composing the general court-martial, his courage seemed to ooze out from his fingertips.

Captain Lutz read the charges and Donny saw a scowl come to the face of Major Parrish, the judge advocate.

"How do you plead, guilty or not guilty?" the major snapped.

The bite in the major's tone acted as a stimulant to Donny. The resentment that had smoldered in him during the long days and nights in the guardhouse burst into flame.

"Not guilty!" he cried. "The charges have been preferred by a prejudiced absentee, a Kansan, who—"

Major Parrish's fist banged on the table before him. "Answer yes or no, that's all. Your counsel will make your defense."

"Not guilty, then!" Donny said, heatedly. "And I prefer to make my own defense. According to regulations—"

"I know the regulations," cut in Major Parrish. "And I'm warning you right now, that this court will tolerate no insubordination. Serious charges have been preferred against you, and your attitude convinces me that they are not unfounded. Captain Vance, proceed with the defense!"

A cold chill settled upon Donny Fletcher and seeped through his entire body. He knew, then, that he was doomed. The ensuing two hours were a mockery. There could be but one sentence proc'aimed by men whose homes were even now being ravaged by the enemy. To them, Donny was the enemy.

The sentence was proclaimed two hours later. Death by the firing squad, at sunrise of the third day.

"I'm sorry," Captain Vance told Donny. "I'll make immediate appeal to General Fremont."

Donny looked at the captain and shook his head. "You expect an answer in three days? Fremont had more time than that to send reinforcements to Lyon, and yet he couldn't make up his mind."

Donny was removed from the guardhouse that afternoon, to a small room on the second floor of the headquarters building. There was one window in the room, which looked out upon the rear and was barred. A sentry was posted outside his door.

The only furniture in the room was an iron bedstead, which contained a mattress and one blanket. Donny dropped down on it, heard the key turn in the lock and the steady tread of heavy boots outside the door begin a ceaseless marching . . . back and forth . . . pause . . . back and forth.

DONNY FLETCHER lay on the bed in his guarded room and stared at the warped wooden ceiling overhead.

Well, he was out of it. They might fight and kill until there were left no more to kill. But he wouldn't know about that. He would be dead then—as dead as those poor deluded men who had died at Wilson's Creek.

There was no difference between them. They had died from bullets, just as Donny would die. He had a small advantage over them; the bullets that would smash into him would be well aimed. There was no danger of his being merely wounded and suffering horribly before death came. It would be short and merciful.

Yet—think all he wanted, he couldn't down it. He would have changed places with any one of those men who had died at Wilson's Creek. They had perished in the heat of a battle, they had been instilled with something—call it just a principle if you like—but they'd had it. They'd been volunteers, every one of them. They faced the enemy and fought him, and went down into death victorious. They gave their lives for a Cause.

And Donny Fletcher had no Cause. He was dying a criminal's death. A traitor's death, that he had not earned.

There had been no treason in his heart, no thought of murder. He'd killed a man—yes, two. But why? Because *they* had committed murder and in the end had tried to kill Donny.

A second's delay and they would have succeeded.

That one of them had enlistment papers in his pocket—well, that had been the barest of accidents. Certainly, the man would have been no asset to any army. A thief and a cold-blooded murderer. For killing such, Donny Fletcher, commissioned a captain in the army of the United States, was now facing execution.

In three short days.

It rained outside and Donny heard the patter of the rain drops on the roof. After awhile a cold drop of rain splashed on his face and roused him from his bitter reverie. It had more effect on him than a bucket of ice water would have had under other circumstances.

His eyes jerked open and fastened on a dark wet spot in the warped, wooden ceiling. Another drop of water fell from the spot and landed on his chin.

Then suddenly he was up from the bed, standing on it. The ceiling was low and he could place his palms flat against it. He tapped it with his knuckles and it gave off a hollow sound.

He stepped to the edge of the bed, climbed cautiously upon the high headboard; raising himself suddenly, he gripped the ceiling with the flat of both hands.

It was tricky balancing for a moment, but he made it.

He had to stand crouched, for being at such a height his head touched the

ceiling. He twisted it sidewards until he got an eye up to a crack.

What he saw sent a glimmer of hope coursing through him.

There was a shallow attic over his ceiling and above it a roof—a plain, ordinary board roof on the other side of which was probably tar paper. That was all there was between Donny Fletcher and the open sky.

Two thicknesses of one-inch planking, badly warped, and a thin layer of tarpaper. With an ax he could chop it through in five minutes.

He didn't have an ax. But was it necessary? The sentry outside the door had a rifle. He had to be disposed of before Donny could hope to chop through the ceiling and roof, so why not utilize his bayonet?"

It would be dark in a little while and he needed the darkness to make good his escape from Rolla. He dropped to the bed and with his hands folded under his head regarded the ceiling, thoughtfully. He considered, too, the consequences of his act and came to the conclusion that he had no other choice. In three days he would be executed. The camp was too confused for anyone with sufficient authority to intercede for him and take the subject up with the higher authorities in St. Louis. For that matter, it was doubtful if Fremont would intercede. He had published an order only recently to the effect that anyone taking up arms against the forces of the United States would suffer the penalty of death.

Donny was innocent of the charges against him. He could not prove them and he was young and had a natural desire to live.

Yes, if he made his escape, he would be proscribed a traitor. But alive, there was a *chance* that some day he could prove his innocence. Better a live traitor than a dead martyr.

THERE was a scuffling of boots outside his door and the sentry opened it and set down a mess kit containing meat, beans and a chunk of corn bread and a canteen of water. He set a lighted candle on the floor.

"Hurry up and eat," he said. "I want to get the things and the candle in fifteen minutes." He slammed the door behind him.

Donny got up and ate swiftly. It might be a long time before he obtained substantial food again. He drank deeply of the canteen, too; then, moving the candle to one side, he dropped to the floor, doubled up and pressed his stomach with both hands.

He cried out in a tone of forced anguish: "Poison! I've been poisoned. Help—get a doctor. I'm dying!"

He punctuated his words with alternate wails and groans, making them loud enough to be heard outside the door.

The act brought quick results. The sentry's voice called roughly from outside the door: "What the hell's the matter in there . . . ?"

Donny ignored the direct question. He groaned and sobbed. "Poisoned! Somebody poisoned the food—I'm dying—"

The door was slammed open and Donny clawed at his stomach. Without seeming to look at the sentry, he wailed: "I've been poisoned . . . !"

Holding his rifle at the trail, the sentry stooped forward. Both of Donny's feet, shod in heavy cavalry boots, catapulted out and landed heavily on the sentry's chin. He cried out and fell back. At the same time his lax fingers released the rifle, which fell forward, toward Donny.

He caught it in mid-air and sprang to his feet, as the sentry's body hit the floor. Swiftly, he dragged the man farther into the room, then poked his head out into the corridor. The hall was dimly lit by a candle at one end, and Donny could see brighter light coming up from the staircase. He knew he could never get out that way. It had to be the roof.

Swiftly he moved the candle to the center of the room. Then he reached toward the ceiling with the bayonetted rifle, aimed at a crack between the warped boards and stabbed upwards. The bayonet went between the boards to half its length. Savagely, Donny pushed sideways on it. Nails pulled out of timbers with protesting rasp, but one end of a board came loose. Donny stabbed the bayonet into the loose end,

pulled it down to the reach of his hands and wrenched it off.

A second board came loose just as easily. Donny moved the bed directly under the opening, then, and with the added height stabbed the bayonet up through the opening into the roof.

The blade went through rotten wood and rain splashed on Donny's face. A gleam in his eyes, he mounted to the raised headboard of the bed, and thrust his head and shoulders into the attic. It was an easy task to pull himself up and inside of three minutes he had cut a hole in the roof large enough to climb through.

It was a black, soggy night. The rain came down in sheets. The tarpaper of the roof was slippery. Donny caught at the ragged edge of opening he had chopped through and let himself slowly to the edge of the roof. He peered down, but could only see blackness. He knew that it was thirty feet or more to the ground and that he stood an excellent chance of breaking a leg or ankle in the drop.

Well, there was no alternative. If he were recaptured he would never get another opportunity to escape. It had to be now, or not at all.

He let go of the bayoneted rifle and heard it strike the earth with a sodden splash.

Then he let go. The fall seemed much more than thirty feet, but he kept himself relaxed and when he landed violently on both feet, threw himself forward to the ground.

His face went into muck, a sizeable portion of it squished up both sleeves, but triumph coursed through him. He wasn't hurt and he was on the ground. He groped for a moment in the mud for the rifle he had dropped and found it.

Then he was off. He had gone no more than fifty feet than guns banged in the darkness behind him and he knew that his escape had been discovered—far too soon!

(To be continued)

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BUZZARD BAIT

A Novelette

By W. C. TUTTLE

"Keep your hands where they are, you fool! Look out, you—"

LIFE had not been too kind to Red Snow. Draw poker on a cowpuncher's salary rarely pays dividends. Even when he did amass a section or two of rangeland, a few horses and cattle, and a registered brand, he eventually succumbed to the lure of draw-and-bluff—and went ingloriously broke.

Red could rope, ride and shoot, and he knew cows and horses, but he never learned how to make two pairs beat a full house. Right now Red needed a job. In the city, folks do not yell, "Climb down and fill up—grub's gone!"

Perhaps that was why Red sat in an ornate hotel room with a wide-hatted gent who exuded prosperity and perfume and looked like the head man of a medicine show. The big man mixed Scotch and fizz-water in tall glasses, but Red waved the drink aside.

"Don't drink?" queried the man, looking closely at the tall brown-haired cowboy.

"Not on a stummick as empty as mine," replied Red. "You drink 'em both, pardner."

With the two drinks under his belt, the big man seemed to expand. Red said:

"You've been doggin' me for three days. Every time I look up, I see you. I'm wonderin' why."

"I didn't suppose you noticed me."

"With a figure like yours?"

"That's right," the big man nodded. He looked keenly at Red for several moments.

"Would you like to make a lot of money?" he asked.

"And still stay out of jail?" asked Red quickly. "I'd like it quite a lot."

"You would, eh?" The man looked closely at Red again. "All right. As a beginning, your name, let's say, is Len Archer."

"Except that it happens to be Red Snow," the younger man grinned.

"Um. Why the name Red? Your hair is brown."

"I've heard that the name was Redfield. That's a hell of a name for a kid, but I reckon I was a hell of a kid."

"Where are your father and mother?"

Red straightened in his chair. "What's it to yuh?"

"You have a father and mother, I presume."

"Well, I dunno if I have or not. But what's the difference?"

"Might save mistakes—if yuh haven't,

Red. Yuh see, they couldn't pop up accidental-like and queer the deal."

"All right—let's say I haven't any folks. Anyway, I don't reckon they will cut in on any deal. Go ahead."

The big man lighted a cigar and rolled it between his heavy teeth.

"Did you ever hear of a man named Jim Archer?"

"Don't reckon I have. The name ain't familiar."

"Did you ever hear of Blue Eagle Valley, the town of Encinas, or the Lazy A spread?"

Red nodded slowly. "I've heard of Blue Eagle Valley. Knew a puncher who came from there. But all I know is the name."

"How old are you?"

Red paused in rolling a cigarette and looked at the big man. He took his time in shaping the smoke.

"I think I'm about twenty-five," he replied. "I'm just a little hazy on it, pardner."

"My name is Ben Blake, Red. I own the Double B, back-to-back spread. My place is in Blue Eagle Valley, too. I'm a big man over there."

"Yo're not so damn small out here in Los Angeles."

RED lighted his cigarette and leaned back in his chair.

"Now that we're acquainted," he said, "how about you tellin' me how to make a lot of money—and still keep out of jail."

"I spoke about Jim Archer," said Ben Blake. "Archer was murdered here a week ago. He came here and sold a shipment of cattle, collected about twenty thousand dollars, and was killed by a man named Pete Reko, who got away with the money. Pete was his foreman.

"Bill Colton, a lawyer of Encinas, knowin' that I was here, wired me to identify the body. It was Jimmy Archer, all right. I've known him for years. He had no relatives to handle the matter, so money was sent to me to bury him here. I handled all the details and put Jim in a first-class cemetery. The police are lookin' for Pete Reko."

"Yuh mean to say that Jim Archer, a big cattleman of Blue Eagle Valley, didn't have friends enough to want his body back home?" asked Red.

"Jim Archer," replied Ben Blake, "didn't have friends. He was a hard man to get along with. This story goes back about twenty-three years, Red. Jim Archer didn't have much in them days, except a wife and a boy. His wife ran away with a gambler named Tinley, and Jim Archer never spoke about her again. But he did want that kid, and I happen to know that he spent money tryin' to trace him. Tinley was killed in a saloon in Cheyenne, but they say that the woman had left him before that. Jim Archer busted a faro bank in San Francisco, took his stake and bought out a brand in Blue Eagle Valley. His luck stuck with him, and he built up as fine a spread as there is in the state. Jim Archer and me wasn't friends—never have been."

Ben Blake lighted his cigar and scowled thoughtfully.

"Yuh see, Red, that Lazy A spread needs an owner."

"Meanin' which?" queried Red.

"The long lost son of Jim Archer."

"Len Archer, eh?"

"That's the idea. I'll tell yuh somethin', Red—you fit. You're the right age. I've been studyin' you for a long time, and I'll swear that you look like Jim Archer did the first time I ever seen him. Hell, you can pass as his son."

"How could you go about provin' such a thing, Blake?" asked Red.

"I don't have to prove it. I can say that I seen you and noticed how much yuh looked like Jim Archer looked at yore age. I can say that I questioned you and that you don't know who your parents were. And there's one other thing, Red. You showed me a pocket-piece that you used to always wear around your neck on a string. You don't know where yuh got it. It's just somethin' you've always had."

"A pocket-piece, eh?" said Red. "What is the thing?"

Blake took it from inside a billfold and handed it to Red. It was a round, coin-like piece of bronze, worn thin. Near the edge was a round hole, large enough for a chain link or a string. On

one side was an inscription in Latin, nearly obliterated now, and on the other side was a faint impression of a centaur drawing a boy, and walking on what seemed to be a rope or a tight-wire. Over the head of the centaur was another Latin inscription, illegible now, and under the rope, curved with the coin, was the one word *Archer*.

Red handed it back to Blake, who replaced it in his billfold.

"Do you sabe what it means?" asked Red. Blake nodded slowly.

"It is the coat-of-arms of the Archer family," he said. "It was Jim Archer's good luck piece. It wasn't so badly worn in them days."

"Would I be supposed to have one like it?" asked Red smiling.

"Len Archer had one," replied Blake. "A jeweler in San Francisco made a duplicate of this one, in gold, when Jim's kid was born. Jim Archer believed in stuff of that kind. I remember he paid twenty dollars for the kid's coin—and Archer was a poor man."

RED nodded slowly, thoughtfully. "Do yuh think that would prove anythin'? Won't they ask for Jim Archer's good luck piece—I mean, those folks back in Blue Eagle Valley?"

Blake smiled and shook his head. "I'm afraid not. The coroner turned over Jim Archer's personal effects to me, and I signed for them. He gave me a duplicate list. It just happens that this thing fell on the floor, while he was makin' out the list, and he didn't include it, because I had it under my foot. When I dropped my cigar—I got the medal."

"Smart, eh?" smiled Red.

"When they get ahead of Ben Blake—they don't," replied Blake. "Red, that ranch is worth a lot of money, and here's the deal. You claim to be Len Archer, and I'll back your claim. When the ranch is turned over to you, I buy yuh out for twenty thousand cash, and no questions asked."

"It looks like easy money," said Red quietly. "Do we write out the deal and sign it?"

"Do I look like a sucker?" flared Blake. "Nothin' on paper. This is a deal between men. Take it now or leave it."

Red studied Blake for several moments. The deal was crooked, and Blake was a crook, but Red was hungry. That lone two-bit piece in his pocket would buy his last meal. He felt of it, his eyes thoughtful.

"I'm broke," he said slowly, "and I crave a thick steak."

"Agree on this deal and I'll buy yuh the biggest steak in town, Red."

"Well," Red smiled wistfully, "I'll be Len Archer. I'd be Aaron Burr for a hamburger. You don't know how damn hungry I am, Blake."

"We'll fix that mighty quick," laughed Blake. "Wait'll I mix me one more drink—I feel like celebratin'."

They went to the hotel dining room, where Red ordered the only big meal he had eaten in a week. While he regaled himself with a thick steak, Ben Blake perused the afternoon paper. Suddenly his face grew grim, as he carefully read a story, mumbling the words half-aloud. Then he said to Red:

"The police found Pete Reko."

"Yeah?" queried Red, interested. "What'll that do to our deal, Blake?"

"Nothin'—he was dead. Been dead a week, they say here. Shot through the head. Didn't have a cent of the money on him. They identified him by papers, a watch and a few things. Somebody got him for that money, Red."

"Are you goin' to do anythin' about it?" Red asked. Blake shrugged his shoulders. "Not me—it's not my affair. We're goin' to Encinas."

"You're the boss, Blake."

"And don't forget it," added Blake. "No one ever crosses Ben Blake."

Red smiled to himself, as Blake said, "We're dropping the name Red, and puttin' in Len. From now on, you're Len Archer, kid; and don't forget it."

"I hope," sighed Red, "that I don't have to trade that for a number. At least, that was a good meal."

Ben Blake checked out of the hotel and bought tickets to Apache Springs.

"There's only one person we've got to look out for," he told Red. "That's Dave Kelly, a lawyer in Encinas. He didn't handle any of Jim Archer's business, but he was about the only friend Jim

had. He's an old devil, contrary as a mule, and he prob'ly knows more about Archer than anybody else. Yuh see, Colton was Archer's lawyer, and he ordered me to bury Archer here. After the funeral I got a wire from Kelly, sayin' that he would pay the expenses of bringin' the body back here. But it was too late, so I didn't answer it. If it wasn't for Kelly—well, we won't worry about Kelly."

"Well, if I'm the only relative—" suggested Red.

"We'll wait and see what Kelly produces, Red. He hates me and Colton, and he'll do his damndest, you can bet on that."

"This might not be so easy, eh?"

"Don't worry—Ben Blake knows his way around. I'm gettin' off at Yuma and stayin' there a couple days. You go to Encinas and look up Kelly. Tell him who yuh are—Len Archer. Here's the newspaper clippin' of your father's murder. You knowed that your father was a Jim Archer, so yuh came to investigate. If it comes down to cases, you show him that medal. Remember, you don't know me. I'll give yuh money enough to live at the Encinas Hotel until this is settled."

"That's all right," replied Red, "but I can't answer any questions."

"That's the beauty of the deal, Red. You don't have to prove anythin'. You don't remember anything, because you was too young. All you know is that you was raised by a family named Snow, and that they told yuh your right name was Archer. By the way, have you any idea where the Snow family are, Red?"

"They are both dead," replied Red quietly.

"This deal is a cinch," said Ben Blake.

On their way to the depot they went past the hotel, where Blake asked regarding mail or telegrams, and was given a telegram. He read it, a scowl between his eyes, asked for a telegraph blank and went to a table. Blake intended to put the telegram in his pocket, but it fell to the floor. Red picked it up and scanned it quickly. It read:

KELLY HAS LOCATED ELLEN WYLEY.
COLTON.

Red folded it up and gave it to Blake.

"You dropped it," he said. Blake grunted and walked across the lobby to file his reply to Colton.

"Good news?" queried Red, as they left the hotel.

"Wire from a cattle-buyer," Blake said curtly. "I won't stop at Yuma, Len Archer. I'll go straight through with you."

IT WAS about four o'clock in the afternoon, when the long passenger train drew to a stop at the sun-baked town of Apache Springs. Blake and Red got off different coaches, as though they were strangers. There was a girl behind Red. Her heel caught in the step as she got off, and Red whirled just in time to save her a nasty fall.

She was a pretty girl, plainly dressed, and much embarrassed, as she adjusted her hat.

"Thank you very much," she said throatily. "I—that was clumsy."

"No trouble," Red smiled.

"You ain't very heavy, ma'am. Hope I didn't hurt yuh. Yuh see, yo're the first young lady I ever caught thataway."

They laughed at each other, neither of them knowing what to say next.

"Well, thanks, anyway," she said.

"You're welcome, ma'am," said Red soberly, and walked away.

Apache Springs was a typical railroad cow town, with a one-sided main street. Ben Blake had told Red that the stage for Encinas left at midnight, because of the extreme heat, so Red did not go to a hotel. He ate supper in a sweltering little restaurant, where the temperature must have been well over one hundred degrees in the shade. A big shipment of cattle was being loaded, and the town was filled with thirsty cowpunchers.

About nine o'clock that evening, Red ran into Ben Blake, and the big man drew him aside to give him a few dollars.

"You're not goin' out on the midnight stage," he told Red. "Get a room at the hotel. I don't want yuh to show up for a couple days. I'd better be there a few days before you show up, and kinda have things lined up."

"All right," agreed Red.

"And stay sober," advised Blake. "Sober men don't tell what they know."

A little later Red saw Blake with a tall, mustached individual, who looked like a tin-horn gambler. Red inquired about the man, and found that Blake's companion was Colton, the Encinas lawyer.

His informant said: "They're a fine pair, them two. They just about run the town of Encinas, and if a dog's hind leg was any crookeder than them two, he'd have to run in a circle. Blake is loud and smart, while Colton is quiet and smart. If yuh ever drew to them two, you'd prob'ly catch a stretch in the penitentiary."

Red had left his war-sack with the bartender in a small saloon; so he got it and went to the hotel, intending to get a room. But it was too hot for sleep, and Red had no desire to swelter in a two-dollar room.

He wandered up to the stage depot, where he flung his sack on a bench. He could curl up in his own blanket on a vacant lot, sleep better and also save the price of a room.

He was sprawled on the bench, smoking a cigarette, when that same girl came into the building and inquired about the stage to Encinas. She saw Red and smiled a greeting.

"Are you going out on the stage, too?" she asked.

"Are you headin' for Encinas, ma'am?" he countered.

"Yes, if there is room on the stage."

The driver, looking over some last minute packages, laughed, and said, "I reckon you two are all the passengers I'll have."

"Fine," said Red quietly. "How long does it take to make the trip?"

"Six hours, if we don't break down—which we prob'ly will. I'll get yuh into Encinas for breakfast, I hope. Well, we might as well load up."

He picked up the girl's valise. As she got up to follow him, Red dug into his war-sack, took out a heavy Colt forty-five and shoved it inside the waist-band of his pants, leaving the belt and holster in the bag. Then he tossed his war-sack up to the driver and got into the stage with the girl.

EVEN at midnight the heat was overpowering, and the heavy wheels of the stage ground up dust, which sifted into the stage, making travel almost unbearable. On the opposite seat was a large canteen of water, but no cup. There was a bright moon, which gave them an occasional view of the country through the screen of dust.

"Do you live in Encinas?" asked the girl.

"No, ma'am, I've never been there," replied Red.

"Neither have I."

"Couple pilgrims, eh?" laughed Red. "Well, we shore picked a hot night to make our first visit. If you've got a clean handkerchief, or somethin' like that, we can wet it from the canteen and put it over your nose and mouth. It'll kinda keep the dust out."

The girl produced a large, white handkerchief, which Red soaked from the canteen.

"Haven't you one?" she asked.

"Ma'am, I'm a dust-eater," he told her soberly. "I've done eaten so much dust from trailin' cows that this don't bother me none a-tall. After yuh get well coated, it don't bother none. Have you got folks in Encinas?"

"No, I haven't."

"Neither have I."

That seemed to end the conversation. Mile after mile the stage jolted along, finally reaching a winding cañon, where the road wound along stark cliffs, far above the depths of the cañon, gradually going down toward the Blue Eagle Valley.

It was cooler now, and there was no dust. The huge moon seemed to hang just over the rim of the cañon. The old stage lurched and swayed as the driver eased them around the sharp turns, where rocks towered high above the stage. The girl was asleep, her face partly visible in the moonlight through the dusty window. Red wondered what Ben Blake would say about his disobeying orders and coming to Encinas ahead of time. But Red was not worrying about Ben Blake's opinions.

The driver eased the four horses at a turn, swinging the leaders far out on

the edge, and as the wheels cramped on the turn, Red heard him exclaim loudly:

"What in hell!"

The stage jerked to a stop. A man's voice rasped:

"Keep yore hands where they are, you fool! Look out, you—"

A rifle shot split the night, echoing along the cliffs, like dozens of smaller reports. A voice snapped:

"Grab the leaders!"

Red slipped his Colt from the waistband of his pants. It was a holdup, and they had shot the driver. The girl was awake, dazed, questioning. Red said, "Keep down, ma'am."

A man had stepped between the stage and the rim of the cañon, a rifle in his hands. He said:

"Come out of that stage—and come quick!"

Shoving the girl back into a corner, Red swung the stage door wide and a moment later his .45 blasted the stillness. The man jerked back, stumbling on his heels, flung out his arms, falling backwards over the edge of the cañon. The girl gasped something, but Red said:

"Stay back there, ma'am—there's one over the edge."

He heard the voice of another man, cursing at a distance. Red jumped from the stage, dropped low, his eyes searching the grade. Then he heard the sound of running feet, and ran past the rear of the stage. There was at least one man running along the grade, heading back toward Apache Springs, but in the heavy shadow.

"Smart stick-up men," grunted Red. "Back-trackin'. Prob'ly got horses staked out in one of them little brushy canons. Well, that's that."

He went back and found the girl outside the stage. He called to her that everything was all right, and then climbed up on the driver's seat. The driver was not dead, but badly injured and unconscious. Red said to the girl:

"We'll fix him up in the stage, and we'll ride on the seat."

"Is he badly hurt?" she asked.

"Bad enough. Shot through the body and he's bled quite a lot, but he's got a chance, if we can get him to a doctor."

They climbed to the seat and Red gathered in the lines.

"I don't know this road, sister, but I do know how to swing four. You hang onto your hat and the seat, 'cause we're takin' a wounded man to a doctor."

"Did—did you shoot one man?" she asked nervously.

"Uh-huh. We won't worry about him, though—that ditch must be at least five hundred feet straight down."

Red kicked off the brake and swung past the point.

"Didja ever read 'Ben Hur,' ma'am?" he asked.

"Yes, I have."

"They say he was quite a driver. But, shucks, he had a two-wheeled cart, a flat track and four broncs abreast. I'll show yuh some drivin' that would give Ben Hur a nervous breakdown. C'mon, broncs—you're being drove."

FIFTEEN minutes ahead of schedule, Red swung the four horses in a sweeping curve in the main street of Encinas, and drew up at the stage office. The disheveled girl beside him grinned at him through dusty eyes and slapped the dirt off the hat she held in her lap.

"Went some, didn't we?" asked Red soberly.

Men came out and crowded around the stage, wondering who the new driver was, and Red, in a few words, told them what had happened and asked them to get a doctor at once. Then he helped the girl down and handed her the dust-covered valise. No one asked any questions as they carefully removed the unconscious man from the stage. Someone had gone to awaken the sheriff, who came in a few moments, half-dressed, trailed by his deputy.

Hank Elliott, the sheriff, was as thin as a reed, tough as whalebone, with a thin face, small, serious eyes and nervous hands. Yuma Johnson, the deputy, was six feet, four inches tall, a huge figure of a man, with a round head, mild blue eyes, a button-like nose and a mop of blond hair.

Red explained in detail just what happened, as far as he knew, and the sheriff nodded soberly.

"Holdup, eh?" he said. "Didn't git nothin', eh?"

"One of 'em got a forty-five, Hank," said the deputy. "That's somethin', ain't it?"

"Whereat did ya blast him off the grade?" asked the sheriff.

"Well," smiled Red, "you know how it is. I've never been on that road before, and in the moonlight yuh don't pick up landmarks. All I can tell yuh that it was at one of them seven hundred turns along the cañon."

"Uh-huh. And the others ran away, eh?"

"At least one," replied Red. "He was in the shadow. Prob'ly had horses staked back there."

The sheriff turned to a man in shirt-sleeves, bareheaded and with a pencil behind his ear.

"Was there any shipment of valuables on the stage, Mort?" he asked.

"Nope. Wasn't no valuables at all, sheriff."

"Uh-huh. Who was the lady with yuh on the stage?"

"I never got her name," replied Red. "She got on at Apache Springs."

"I never seen her before," said the stage-agent."

"Neither did I," said the sheriff.

"Me neither," added the deputy, "and that makes her a stranger."

The sheriff turned back to Red.

"What's your name," he asked. Red smiled thoughtfully, as he replied:

"Names don't mean much. Mine's Len Archer."

The three men looked closely at him for several moments. Then the sheriff said, "Len Archer, eh? Uh-huh. Goin' to be with us a while?"

"Well, I dunno," smiled Red. "I might work up a like for this place. My first name is Len, but everybody calls me Red."

"They do? Your hair ain't red," said the deputy.

"You ought to see my underclothes," said Red, and they all laughed.

"Well, we're sure obliged to you for bringin' in the stage and the driver," said the stage-agent. "I'll see that you get your fare back. If there's anything we can do for you, just ask."

CHAPTER II

"CAUTIOUS—AND SMART!"

RED thanked them and went to the hotel, carrying his war-sack. Encinas was about the same size as Apache Springs, except that there were two sides to the main street, and everything seemed a bit more primitive. As for heat, Encinas ran a close second to Apache Springs.

The girl was in the little hotel lobby, talking with a raw-boned, hard-faced man with gray hair, when Red came in. He turned from the girl and came over to Red.

"I want to thank you for bringing this young lady through safely," he said. "My name is David Kelly, and I am a lawyer."

"Oh, yeah," said Red quietly. So this was the man that Blake had warned him against. Kelly looked like a decent citizen and his eyes were honest.

"My name's Archer," said Red. Kelly's eyes widened a trifle and his jaw sagged momentarily.

"Oh, I see—Archer," he said. "Well, I am glad to have met you, sir."

"Thank yuh," said Red. "Just call me Red."

Kelly nodded and went back to the girl. He spoke quietly to her, took a key from the rack behind the desk, picked up the girl's valise and they went up the stairs together. Red looked after them, until they were out of sight. The old hotel-keeper came from the dining room and looked at Red.

"Want a room?" he asked.

"Yeah, I reckon. How much?"

"Four bits a night and worth it. What's the name?"

"Archer. Red Archer."

"Hu-u-uh?" The man stroked his stubbled chin. "Archer, yuh say?"

"Anythin' wrong with havin' the name of Archer," asked Red.

"Oh, no—sure not. I—uh—yeah, that's right, you want a room. Oh, yeah, you're the feller who drove the stage in from the holdup. Good work, young feller. Archer. Huh! I'll show yuh the room."

Red washed and shaved in lukewarm

water, before going down to breakfast. There was no one else in the little dining room, with its rough tables and colored linen. Red was finishing his meal, when Kelly came in. The lawyer nodded and sat down across the table from Red.

"Young man," he said quietly," what's your game?"

"Draw poker," replied Red quickly. "But yuh can't suck me in to a game until I get a stake. Right now, I'm all bent to thunder."

"I didn't mean that, and you know it," said the lawyer. "Who sent you in here?"

Red's eyes roved around the room.

"Just lookin' for the judge and jury," he said soberly. "I thought for a minute that I was on trial."

"You're liable to be, at that. Who told you that your name was Archer?"

Red smiled slowly. "Who told you your name was Kelly?" he countered.

"Pretty smart, aren't you?"

"If you were born a Kelly, nobody had to tell yuh your name."

The lawyer leaned back in his chair, his eyes fixed on Red, who proceeded to drink his third cup of coffee. Kelly was a shrewd judge of human nature, and he realized that he had taken the wrong attitude. This bronzed cowboy was either a nervy kid—or honest.

"Why did you come to Encinas?" asked Kelly, his attitude conciliatory now. Red finished his coffee and reached for his cigarette makings.

"I read in the paper in San Francisco that a man named Jim Archer had been killed. I read that he was from Encinas. I came here to try and find out if he was my father. Is there anythin' wrong about that?"

"You also read that Jim Archer left a large estate, too, didn't you?"

Red nodded slowly. "Yeah, I heard he did. Was the report true?"

Kelly ignored the question.

"Who told you that Jim Archer ever had a son?"

"There yuh go again, workin' without a judge and jury."

"Never mind that," said Kelly, losing his temper. "I asked you a question."

"Now I'll ask you one," smiled Red. "Didn't he have a son?"

Kelly relaxed again and lighted a cigar. "We are not getting any place, sparring like this. Did you come from San Francisco?"

"That's right," Red agreed.

"And in San Francisco you met a man named Ben Blake."

"Did I?" queried Red innocently. "What does he do in San Francisco?"

"Aw, hell!" snorted Kelly disgustedly. He got to his feet and went striding out of the dining-room, leaving a cloud of smoke behind him.

The waitress, coming from the kitchen, saw Kelly leave. She came over to Red's table, smiling slightly.

"Mr. Kelly acts mad," she said.

"Mr. Kelly," replied Red soberly, "ain't actin', my dear lady."

The sheriff met Red as he came from the dining room.

"Me and Yuma are ridin' out on the grades, and I wondered if you'd go along and try to locate the place where yuh knocked the feller off the edge of the cañon," he said. "We've got a good horse for yuh."

"Sure," Red agreed. "I might be able to find the place, at that. I'll be right with yuh."

He donned a well-worn pair of chaps, bucked on his gun-belt, and met the sheriff at his stable, where Yuma waited with the horses.

"Is your name Archer?" asked the sheriff.

"Yeah, I reckon it is," replied Red, as he mounted easily and reined his horse around.

"Any kin to Jim Archer, who got killed in San Francisco?" asked Yuma.

"I dunno—yet," replied Red. "Anyway, it's the same name. How's that stage driver this mornin'?"

"Doc Byers says he's got a chance to pull through. Hope so, 'cause he's got a wife and a kid. His name's Ed Wilson."

NEITHER of the officers mentioned the name of Archer again during the long, hot ride. About noon they reached the turn, which Red decided was the place where the holdup had been attempted. They dismounted and looked the place over, but there was nothing to prove that

"It's up to the buzzards now. Yuh can't fool them."

it was the right spot, until Red walked back a short distance and looked closely at the jumble of rocks near the rim. Then he picked up an empty rifle cartridge and looked it over.

"This is the place," he declared. "When that feller shot the driver with his rifle, he pumped out the empty shell. It's a thirty-eight-fifty-five rifle."

"I didn't know there was one in the valley," said Yuma. "Most of the boys use thirty-thirties."

"Better move the horses," said the sheriff. "Here comes a buckboard."

They led the three horses out near the rim of the grade, as the buckboard team drew to a stop on the curve. The occupants were Ben Blake and Bill Colton. Blake flashed Red a malevolent look, but otherwise ignored him. Red had disobeyed his order to stay in Apache Springs.

"What brings yuh out here, sheriff?" asked the tall Colton.

"Attempted stage holdup last night," replied the sheriff. "Couple boys stuck up the stage and shot the driver. One of 'em got in range of this here young feller, and got himself shot off the grade. We just located the spot."

"Got himself shot off the grade?" queried Blake.

"Yeah," Red drawled. "After they shot the driver, one of 'em stepped out there beside the stage and ordered us out. The blamed fool was in plain sight in the moonlight, so I cut down on him, and he went off the rim. The other one high-tailed it out of here, before I got a shot at him. I drove the stage and the wounded driver to Encinas."

"And it's about four hundred feet to the bottom of that cañon," said Yuma. "He shore must have splattered plenty, or hung up in the top of some old pine tree. Mebbe we'll never find him. That ditch is mighty hard to navigate."

"Well," said Colton, "there's nothin' we can do to help, so we'll go on. See yuh all later."

The buckboard went on around the narrow grades.

"We might as well go back," sighed the sheriff. "Yuh have to get into that cañon from the Blue Eagle end, anyway."

On the way back the sheriff said:

"Did yuh know that girl who came in on the stage?"

"I don't know her name."

"She's Ellen Wyley. Her ma was a sister to Jim Archer. Wyley wasn't much good, and Jim Archer tried to stop 'em from marryin', as I understand it. That was before my time in this country. Anyway, they never did see each other again. This sister died several years ago. I dunno what became of Wyley. But this daughter growed up and became a school teacher in a little school down around Yuma, I believe. I heard that Dave Kelly, one of our lawyers, and a pretty good friend of Jim Archer, knew about this young lady, and he's made a claim on the Archer property for her."

"Them two fellers in the buckboard were Ben Blake, owner of the Double B, and Jim Colton, owner of the Circle C," informed Yuma. "Blake and Kelly hate hell out of each other. Allus have. When I heard you give the name of Archer, we wondered if you was any kin to Jim Archer."

Red smiled.

"I dunno," he said, "why anybody would want to own a range in a country as hot as this."

"Oh, you get petterfied after while," grinned Yuma.

"Speakin' of Colton," said Red, "ain't he a lawyer?"

The sheriff nodded. "He also owns the Circle C. Don't have as much law business as he did. He's handlin' the Archer estate."

"What sort of a feller was Jim Archer?"

"Well, I'll tell yuh," said the sheriff, "he wasn't a public idol."

"He was rawhide warp and whalebone fillin'," said Yuma.

It was evening when they got back to Encinas, hot and tired. Ed Wilson, the stage driver, had died that afternoon, and the people were demanding that the killers be apprehended.

Ben Blake was in town, but Red did not meet him. Ellen Wyley was not at the hotel, and the hotel keeper told Red that she had gone to stay with Dave Kelly's wife.

Red met the sheriff and deputy in the restaurant and sat down with them.

He said, "If we can find the dead man in that cañon, it might give us a lead on who was with him."

The sheriff nodded grimly. "That's right, Red. I'll make up a posse in the mornin', and—"

"No, I wouldn't do that," Red interrupted. "Three of us is enough. If they —Listen, sheriff. There was more than one man, but we don't know how many. If that body would incriminate any of them, they'll get it first. Pass the word that we couldn't locate the place where he went over. I got some landmarks from the grade, and I think I can find the place in the canon—I believe."

"We told Blake and Colton that we found the place," reminded Yuma lugubriously.

"That's all right," said the sheriff. "I'll tell them to keep still about it."

Red smiled to himself, but nodded. He was wondering what Blake would have to say to him.

RED went up to his room, intending to take as much of a bath as the limited facilities of the hotel would afford, and lighted the lamp. On the bed sat Ben Blake, while Bill Colton occupied the one chair. Red looked them over curiously, yanked off his shirt and went over to the bowl and pitcher on the commode.

"How'd you two pelicans get into this room?" he asked calmly.

"Pass-key," replied Colton. "Very simple."

"I see," Red smiled. "Well, if you gentlemen will wait until I get me a little wash-up, I'll—"

Red picked up the filled pitcher, turned quickly and flung the contents straight toward the portly Ben Blake. And with the same swing he sent the pitcher winging toward Bill Colton. Then he leaned against the commode, his six-shooter covering the two.

"You can toss your guns right out on the floor," he told them. "And if yuh even think about takin' a tight grip, you'll need a coroner."

Ben Blake was the first to disarm. His gun thudded on the worn carpet. Bill Colton hesitated, but followed suit.

"Yuh got your bed all wet," said Blake.

"Water dries quicker than blood," replied Red.

"What's the big idea?" demanded Colton angrily.

"You broke into my room," said Red. "You're both armed—and yuh didn't come here to kiss me good night. That's the idea."

"We wanted to talk privately with yuh," said Blake quickly.

"I see. That's why Colton had a gun in his lap, and you had one under your leg. Privately—at the muzzle of a gun. Keep on lyin'—I don't mind."

"If that's the way you are goin' to act—" said Colton, getting to his feet.

"Set down!" Red snapped.

"Do you know who I am?" roared Colton.

"If you don't set down, somebody is goin' to ask me if I know who you *was*. Set down and sing small, big feller."

"Damned young reprobate!" Colton snarled—but he sat down on the chair.

"Are you tryin' to double-cross me?" Blake asked huskily.

Red shook his head.

"Then why did you come in on that stage last night?"

"The heat," replied Red. "Apache Springs was too hot for sleep, so I took a ride down here. Good thing I did, too, after what happened."

Colton and Blake looked at each other. Then Blake looked back at Red.

"I've got a damn good notion to call the whole deal off," he said.

"And," added Red, "you've got another idea that beats that one all to hell, Blake. But yuh can drop it, if yuh feel thataway—I won't."

"You mean—" Blake's voice was very husky. "You mean you'll claim that Archer spread, even if I call our deal quits?"

"Why not?" queried Red easily.

"You fool!" snarled Blake. "One word from me and you'd be run out of the country as an impostor—and you know it."

"And you'd run right along with me, because I've got a tongue. You paid me to come here. And there's another angle, Mr. Blake—you can't prove that I'm not Len Archer, instead of Redfield Snow. Roll that up in paper and see how the smoke tastes."

Colton swore under his breath, and Blake managed to wring some water out of his shirt-front.

"That stage driver died this afternoon," said Red. Colton nodded grimly.

"Are yuh sure," he asked, "that yuh located the right spot on the grade where the stage was stopped?"

Red shook his head. "All them curves look alike at night. But I'm dead sure that I put a killer into Lobo Cañon. He went off the edge backwards, all spread out."

"This ain't gettin' us any place," growled Blake.

"Yuh mean, it ain't gettin' yuh what yuh expected," corrected Red. "I'm wonderin' why you high-binders were waitin' for me in the dark, with two six-guns handy. You wasn't aimin' to erase me, was yuh?"

"Don't be a fool," growled Colton. "We might as well go, Ben."

The bed creaked protestingly, as Blake heaved his huge carcass off the springs.

"Just leave the guns as they are," Red advised. "You won't need 'em."

"You can't do that," said Colton. "Why, damn you, I'll—"

"I know," interrupted Red, "but leave 'em lay. Mebbe tomorrow, when you've both shed your fangs, we might talk sensibly and I might give yuh back the guns. Unloaded, of course, because I can't seem to make myself trust either of yuh."

Blake turned at the doorway and looked at Red.

"I said once that no man can cross Ben Blake," he said evenly. "Don't try it. I'll give yuh until tomorrow to think it over. Blue Eagle Valley ain't no healthy spot for anyone who double-crosses Ben Blake."

"You're quite a remarkable man, Ben Blake," said Red evenly. "I don't believe you've got any notched tombstones in Encinas, so yuh must have scared folks into doin' your dirty work. Me, I don't scare. Words don't mean a thing, Blake. I came here to pull a crooked job for you. Now, I'm wonderin' if I need you. Mebbe it'll all depend on how yuh act. I'm sure awful sensitive, especially in the trigger-finger. *Buenas noches,* gents."

RED stood in the doorway, watching the two men go down the hall toward the rear of the hotel. Evidently that was the way they came, and they did not want to be seen leaving the hotel.

Red looked toward the front and found himself face to face with Dave Kelly, the lawyer.

There was no doubt in Red's mind that Kelly had seen the two men, and recognized them. How long Kelly had been near that door, Red could only surmise. Kelly said, "Can I speak with you a minute?"

Red said, "Come in, Kelly."

He shoved his own gun inside the waist-band of his trousers, and kicked the two guns under the bed. Kelly looked curiously at Red, as he sat down on the one chair, but Red did not feel that any explanation was needed. He sat on the bed and waited for the lawyer to start the conversation.

"Whatever your name is, I'm not interested," said Kelly. "You claim it is Archer. Personally, I don't believe a damn word of it—and I'm not going to believe a word of it, until you can offer more proof than the mere fact of your name being Archer—which I also doubt."

Red sighed.

"Can you prove that my name ain't Archer?" he asked.

"Why should I? It isn't an uncommon name."

"Could you prove that Jim Archer was not my father?"

Kelly laughed shortly. "The burden of proof lies with you."

"Yeah, I reckon that's right. But you must admit that Jim Archer had a son, whose name was Len."

"For the sake of an argument—suppose he did?"

"I reckon I'm that son, Kelly."

"Ridiculous! You are in cahoots with Blake and Colton, trying to steal the Lazy A. Well, you'll do nothing of the sort, young man; and if you go too far, I'll put you behind the bars."

"Not if I happen to be Len Archer."

"But you don't happen to be. You haven't a shred of proof."

"I'm not sure about that, Kelly," said Red, feeling in his pocket and taking out the metal disc that Ben Blake had give him. He handed it to Kelly, and said:

"Take a look at that, will yuh?"

Kelly held it close to the light, a tense expression on his face. Then he turned to Red.

"Where in hell did you get that?" he demanded.

"Had it all my life," Red lied easily. Kelly snorted aloud.

"You're lying! That is Jim Archer's good luck coin. Where did you get it? Don't lie. Ben Blake stole it off Jim Archer's body. Damn you both, you can't get away with things like this. I'd know that coin among a million. Jim Archer was my friend."

Kelly tossed the coin to the table-top and got to his feet.

"If that's all the proof you've got, you better leave Encinas. Had it all your life! Damned impostors!"

Kelly walked to the door and flung it open.

"Yuh ought to take it easy in this hot weather," said Red, not even turning his head.

Kelly slammed the door behind him and stalked down the hallway. Red smiled. It seemed that Dave Kelly was not going to accept that pocket piece as evidence. Red wondered if there was something about it that would prove it belonged to Jim Archer; so he got up and picked up the thing, intending to examine it closely. One glance at the coin was sufficient.

"Smart Mr. Kelly," he muttered aloud. "Took my evidence and left me a twelve-and-a-half-cent drink check on a Tucson Saloon. He might at least have left one on a local grog-shop. What will Ben Blake say now?"

LONG before Encinas showed any signs of awakening, Red, the sheriff and deputy rode out of town, heading for the south end of Lobo Cañon to make a search for the bandit who had gone off the rim.

Lobo Cañon was a deep gut through the earth, winding for miles and at varying widths. The trail in was narrow and dangerous, little used.

Once into the cañon bottom there were no trails. It was a jumble of huge rocks, overgrown with brush, making travel very slow. Red tried to remember landmarks he had noted from the grades, but the view from the bottom was entirely different than from the grades. The sheriff and deputy were nearly as unfamiliar with the cañon as was Red.

"All there ever was in here was rattlers and mountain lions," complained Yuma. "Horses and cattle don't even come in here. I reckon there's water further up the cañon."

Along the sides were long stretches of slide-rock, sloughed from the cliffs, and in varying colors. As Red pointed out, "I dunno how yuh could spot the body of a man in all that color, and there's miles of it. Yuh can see the points of several curves up there at the grades, but we don't know which is the right curve."

"There's one just above us," said the sheriff. "I'll search along there. You and Yuma ride on to the next point, and then one ride on to the next one. It'll save time. As soon as I'm satisfied that I'm in the wrong spot, I'll come along. If yuh find anythin', fire one shot."

Red left Yuma at the next spot and rode on about a quarter of a mile to where he could look up, far up the cañon wall, and see where the builders had built sort of a rip-rap of logs to brace the curve. He drew up his horse and started to dismount, when something struck the horse a solid blow, and the animal went down with him. Falling free of the lashing legs, Red rolled into the brush, while the cliffs echoed the sound of a rifle shot. Red was somewhat jarred by the fall, but escaped injury. He hunched in the brush, gun in hand, listening intently. Someone had tried to kill him, and Red had a feeling that the shot had been fired from up among that sprawling mass of slide-rock.

Watching carefully, he backed out, crawled between two mighty boulders, where he studied the cliffs. Nothing moved. Red knew that the one shot would bring the sheriff and deputy, and they, too, might be targets for this bushwhacker. He backed out of there and started to make his way down the cañon toward where he had left Yuma. The smashing of brush caused him to hunch down, and a rider nearly ran into him.

Red sprang to his feet, frightening the horse, which the rider controlled quickly, only to look into the muzzle of Red's gun.

"Drop that rifle!" Red snapped, and Dave Kelly obeyed.

"Thought yuh got me, eh?" said Red angrily. "Well, all yuh got was the horse this time, my fine dry-gulchin' friend. Wasn't it enough for yuh to steal my pocket-piece, Kelly—or do yuh believe my evidence is so good that you've got to murder me to stop it?"

Kelly removed his sombrero and wiped his brow with a handkerchief. He did not seem greatly concerned over Red's accusations.

"I think you are a damn fool, my friend," said Kelly. "I didn't—"

And then Kelly jerked around in his

saddle and pitched off on his shoulders, while again the cañon echoed and re-echoed from a rifle shot. Kelly's horse whirled and went a few feet, but stopped against the brush. Red ran to Kelly and lifted him to an easier position. They were both below the line of fire now, as Red hastily cut away the shirt and made an examination of the wound. The bullet had torn flesh away from Kelly's left side up near the arm-pit, but seemed to have been deflected by the ribs.

Red used Kelly's shirt to stop the blood and to make a crude bandage. He heard the sheriff and deputy riding up through the brush, and yelled a warning to them. Repeated calls and answers brought them to the spot, where Red told them what had happened. Kelly was still unconscious.

"I thought Kelly shot my horse," explained Red. "I stuck him up and was tellin' him what I thought of dry-gulchers—and they got Kelly."

"It don't figure out so awful clear," said the sheriff. "What was Kelly doin' here, anyway? And why should anyone try to kill both of yuh?"

"My hunch is like this," said Red. "Somebody else is in here. They knew Kelly followed 'em. The horse you gave me is a sorrel, the same as the one Kelly rode. They thought I was Kelly."

"Yea-a-ah, I see. Well, we've got to get Kelly to a doctor. That body can wait. But I still don't see why anybody would come here and—"

"Lookin' for that body," said Red. "They can't let the law find that body. Don't yuh see that? It'll prove who stuck up that stage and killed the driver. I don't believe they know where to look. But we've got one chance to find it after everythin' else fails."

"What's that?" asked the sheriff.

"The buzzards," replied Red. "They'll be comin' to their bait—We'll tie Kelly on his saddle and I'll ride behind him—and we better go careful, 'cause they might start pot-shootin' from that cliff."

BUT no one shot at them. It was a long, hard trip to Encinas, where they turned Kelly over to the doctor. Red had eaten his supper and was on his way to the hotel that evening, when he met Ben Blake.

The big man made no mention of what had happened the night before, but asked roughly:

"What's all this about Kelly gettin' shot?"

Red told him about the search in the cañon, and then told Blake about Kelly's getting that pocket-piece. Blake grunted sourly.

"I'm plumb disappointed with you, Red," he said.

"About what?" Red queried.

"Thinkin' that you could get that Lazy A without my help."

Red laughed. "Well, I reckon we're both sunk without that pocketpiece."

Blake drew a hand from his pocket and let Red see its contents.

Red looked sharply at Blake for several moments. Then he said; "So you went down to the doctor's place to see how Kelly was gettin' along, eh? And you stole that coin again."

"I told you I was smart, Red—smarter than Kelly."

"A fine pair of pickpockets," said Red.

"All right, all right. That coin is worth twenty-five thousand to our side of the case."

"I thought yuh said twenty thousand, Blake."

"I'll up that ante, if you'll stick in the pot. The judge who will handle that probate is my friend. Hell, I elected him."

Red laughed. "I dunno whether it will pay me to play with you, or play my own hand, Blake. Twenty-five thousand dollars. Why, that won't begin to cover the livestock on that spread. Mebbe I don't need you. As far as provin' anythin' is concerned, I can do that as well as the two of us can. Where were you this mornin', Blake?"

"Out at the ranch. Why?"

"Oh, I just wondered."

Blake scowled thoughtfully. Suddenly his eyes narrowed and he said, "Are you tryin' to intimate that I had anythin' to do with the shootin' of Dave Kelly?"

"No-o-o," drawled Red. "Pickpockets rarely shoot."

Bill Colton was coming down the sidewalk and they waited for him. He blurted out:

"Kelly took that Wyley girl out to the Lazy A last night, and she is stayin' out there, bag and baggage."

"Hell!" snorted Blake. "She ain't got no right there. You're runnin' that ranch and—"

"On whose authority?" queried the tall lawyer. "I handled Jim Archer's business, that's all."

"Well, can't you get a court order to remove her? I'll see the judge and—"

"I've got a better idea than that. Send Red out there. He's got a better claim than she has."

Blake looked dubiously at Red for several moments.

Red nodded slowly. "Suits me."

"No foolin', Red. If you go out there, it'll be to work for all of us. Give us your word that you'll go through with it the way we planned."

"I'll go out there," replied Red evenly, "and you'll take that chance. You've got to play with me, Blake. And give me back that coin."

Blake studied the matter closely, but finally handed the pocketpiece to Red.

"You've been warned," he said coldly. "You've got more to lose than the Lazy A, and don't forget it. You're young yet. Barrin' accidents, yuh might live a long time. Just think about that, any time yuh feel that Ben Blake's services are no longer wanted."

"That's what I like about rattlers," said Red soberly. "They mostly always buzz a warnin'. It makes yuh cautious —and smart."

"You're a hard boy to convince, Red," Blake said coldly. "For a young feller with twenty-five thousand in sight, you act like a fool."

"I don't like the job," said Red. "That girl is entitled to the Lazy A. She can *prove* who she is."

"Yuh think so?" queried Blake. "All right, I'll tell you—"

"Better go easy on that," interrupted Colton.

"Oh, he might as well know," said Blake. "He's in no position to tell anythin'. As a matter of fact, Red, that girl is an impostor."

"Yuh mean—Kelly is crooked, too?"

Blake laughed shortly. "When Ben Blake frames a deal, it's framed. Me and Bill got that girl for Kelly, and the poor fool thinks she's Ellen Wyley. We don't overlook any bets. You're both workin' for us."

"Pretty smart," smiled Red. "All right, I'll go out there, too. But just supposin' the real Ellen Wyley finds out things."

"That's a mighty slim chance," said Colton. "She's in that little town of Indio, Arizona, far enough from Yuma that she won't get much news. The population is mostly Mexicans. Kelly wired her there, but we intercepted the telegram, and gave him another Ellen Wyley."

"We don't overlook much," Blake said proudly. "You stick with us, kid, and you'll wear diamonds."

"You said that before," replied Red. "I'll take mine in cash, if yuh don't mind."

CHAPTER III

Man-Trap

THE Lazy A was about three miles from Encinas. The ranch house was a huge, picturesque building, with well-kept fences, big stable and a fine lot of corrals. It had an air of prosperity. Red knew that the holdings consisted of about twenty-five thousand acres.

Sing Lee, the Chinese cook, came to the front door to admit Red.

"You look fo' somebody?" he asked.

Red nodded slowly.

"Yeah, I'd like to see Ellen Wyley."

"Missie Wyley no heah."

"Gone to town?"

"She go 'way yestelday mo'ning. You sabe Blake?"

Red nodded. "Yeah, I know him. What about the girl?"

"She go with Blake. She leave lettah fo' Kelly."

"She did, eh? Kelly got shot. Let me have the letter and I'll take it to Kelly."

"Velly good," nodded the Chinaman. "You wait."

He came back with a sealed envelope and gave it to Red.

"Where's all the boys?" asked Red.

"Bland plenty calf—yo' sabe? Come back bimeby."

"All right, thanks, Charley. See yuh later."

Red went back to his horse and climbed into the saddle. If Ellen Wyley had left yesterday morning with Blake, why had Blake said that she was at the ranch, he wondered? Red tore open the envelope and read Ellen Wyley's letter to Dave Kelly. It said;

> Dear Mr. Kelly:
> I can't go through with the deal. Rather than be branded an impostor, I am leaving the country at once. Perhaps you can find some other girl who will do the job better than I can. Sorry.
> Ellen Wyley.

"Of all the screwy deals!" snorted Red aloud. "An impostor, admittin' it in a letter—and still she went away with Blake, and he told me she was out at the ranch. Somethin' wrong here—dog-gone wrong."

Red looked at the sun. There was yet time for him to get to Lobo Cañon and make a search before dark. He wanted to find the body of the man he had shot off the grade. Previous to this he had a theory, but recent developments had shattered them.

"It's up to the buzzards now," he told himself. "Yuh can't fool them."

But Red did not know that a rider had shadowed him to the ranch, watched him start back and saw him cutting across the hills toward the mouth of Lobo Cañon. Ben Blake was not overlooking anything.

The sun was low over the rim of the cañon, as Red threaded his way among the boulders, scanning the sides of the cliffs for the tell-tale shadows of buzzards. He was nearly back to the spot where his horse had been shot, when a shadow crossed the canon. Red drew up and watched the huge, black scavenger sailing on nearly down to the slide-rock.

Then Red saw the others. Two perched on a jutting ledge, while another sat on a manzanita snag, apparently all intent on something just below them. The flying bird dislodged the two on the ledge, and the three birds flapped and wheeled for a minute, before they all alighted on the ledge.

Red dismounted, tied his horse, untied his lariat and began climbing up the dangerous slide-rock. Above him the buzzards croaked, but were loath to leave their spot. Swinging the loop, Red was able to rope a rocky point or a snag, which assisted greatly in the climb. Finally, with much croaking, the buzzards flapped away to another spot, from where they watched Red's antics.

Finally Red came to a stop against the almost sheer wall. Above him was a ledge, where an huge, old manzanita was rooted. From his awkward position, clinging to the rock with his left hand, Red flung the loop high over the manzanita. It required several throws before the loop drew tight. Red tested it gingerly, but finally swung his weight on the rope and found it secure.

Drawing off his boots, he began an ascent of the rock. The half-inch rope cut his hands, but he fought his way up to where he could get one arm over the ledge and grasp a manzanita stalk. Then he was able to pull himself over the edge, which sloped back sharply. Here, tangled in the manzanita, was the body of a man. Only ten feet above was the ledge where the buzzards had sat to contemplate their meal.

Red had never seen the man before, but the likeness to Ben Blake was startling. An envelope and some papers in his pocket branded him as Jim Blake, Ben Blake's brother, erstwhile foreman of Blake's ranch.

RED stood up and tried to plan out his next move. It was then that he discovered his empty holster. On that climb he had accidently dumped his gun out of the holster, and it was now somewhere down in that tangle of brush and slide-rock.

That side of the cañon was in shadow now, and the shadow was climbing swiftly up on the opposite wall. Red knew there was no time to lose, so he drew up the loose end of his rope, tied it around the corpse and proceeded to lower it down to the slide.

They would be trapped in the fissure, and under direct fire!

It was nearly at the end of the rope, when a bullet burned across Red's shoulder and smashed into the rocky wall behind him, while the cañon echoed from the report of the rifle. Red half turned and went flat on his face, one foot sticking over the ledge.

Twice more that rifle sent echoes along the cañon, and the bullets smashed into rock near Red's foot. For several moments Red was too dazed to draw the foot away, and when he did realize that the foot was in sight, he left it right there to indicate that he was dead.

Red fully realized his position, as he lay there, looking up at the sky. No gun, no means of defense. His only hope was for them to believe him dead. He wanted to look over the edge, but was afraid to move that foot. The buzzards were high over the canon now, circling higher and higher, frightened by the shots.

Red kept perfectly still. Just beside him was the taut rope, the loop tight around a snag. After what seemed hours he could hear voices from below. Then the rope creaked, as additional weight was put on it. Red was afraid that someone was climbing the rope. He took his knife from his pocket, opened the blade and got ready to slash the rope as soon as a hand came over the ledge, but the rope slackened off.

It was evident that someone had removed the body. But Red was not going to move that foot until after dark, unless that rope tightened again. Red touched it with his fingers and found that there was no weight on it now.

Darkness comes swiftly after sundown in the desert country, but Red did not move until it was too dark for him to see that foot. Then he drew it back, massaged his sleepy muscles and sat up. Below him, the cañon was a dark void, with hardly anything visible. Soon the stars or moon would give him some illumination, so he waited until the stars broke out.

As he sprawled on the edge of the shelf, getting a hold on the rope, he saw the flash of a tiny light across the cañon, and some distance beyond. After a few moments the light was stationary. Red stood up and the light vanished. Stooping low, he could see it again, just a pinpoint of light against the blackness of the cliff.

He slid carefully over the edge, clinging to the rope, and began lowering himself, the rope twisted sailor-fashion around one leg. Finally he reached the slide-rock, where he balanced precariously, until he was able to sit down. Praying that his boots had been overlooked, he began a pawing search in the darkness. Luckily he had dropped the boots several feet from the rope-end, where they had slid among the rocks and had been overlooked by those who took the body away. There was no use looking for the gun in the darkness, so Red, with his feet shod again, began inching his way down the slide. There was no chance to walk down. One slip or stumble, and he might break a leg, or worse.

With his hands and knees bruised, and with a well-worn seat in his overalls, Red

reached the bottom. He knew exactly where he had left the horse, but the horse was not there. It was warm in the cañon, and Red had no desire to inch his way out of there and walk back to Encinas, so he sat down and rolled a cigarette.

Again he got a flash of that light along the cliff, but when he stood up the light vanished. Red decided that it must be in a cave or under a projection, and not visible from the stage road on the rim of the cañon. Under the circumstances, distances are deceptive, but Red decided that the light was about a hundred yards beyond him, and some distance up on the cliffs. The starlight was brighter now, and Red was able to move about among the brush and boulders without endangering life or limb.

Making his way carefully, he moved up the cañon. A wildcat, intent on a meal of cotton-tail rabbit, spat at him from a brush heap, and went away from there like a gray shadow. After about a hundred yards of slow traveling, Red stopped to watch and listen. He could not see the light any longer, and was about to search further, when he saw the flicker of a match, as a man lighted a cigarette.

THE man was about a hundred feet away and about fifty feet above the level of the canon. For possibly a minute he could see the tiny glow of the cigarette, and then it vanished, as though the man had gone back.

Slowly Red moved in against the cañon wall, looking for a trail in the dim starlight. He did not find a trail, but the broken rock gave him a chance to climb. He removed his boots and fastened them to his belt, in order to climb as quietly as possible, and he finally found himself on a three-foot ledge.

Leaning in against the sheer cliff, he moved slowly until he saw the flicker again. It was in a cave, the front of which was masked by an overhang of rock. Red was as cautious as a hunting cat now, as he moved toward the entrance. But he slipped on a slanting rock, and several pieces rattled against the slide-rock below. Catching his balance, he hugged the cliff, and a moment later he could see the darker shadow of the upper part of a man's body, as the man leaned out at the corner of the cave, not over a dozen feet from Red.

"*Que es?* he called softly. "*Que es?*"

Red remained silent, and in a minute the man, deciding that there was no danger, turned back into the cave. Breathing more freely, Red moved forward. He picked up a rock in each hand.

Red reached the corner, where the Mexican had appeared. There was not a sound from the cave. Suddenly Red tossed one of the stones along the ledge, where it rattled off and fell into the brush. He heard the scrape of leather on the rocky floor, and the man loomed up, almost against him. The man had a rifle in his hands, as he leaned out over a sort of shelf of rock.

"*Que es?*" he asked loudly.

Red swung his right hand and the rock connected with the Mexican's head. The next moment the Mexican was down behind the shelf, the rifle clattering on the shelf, where Red grabbed it, vaulted into the cave and looked around.

The Mexican was lying where he fell. Only a few feet away was a lantern, lighted but turned low. Near there was the remnants of a cooking fire, a pile of utensils and food. Red turned up the wick of the lantern and examined the Mexican.

"You'll stay put," he said. The man was squat, moon-faced, with a big mustache. The stone had smacked him over the left ear, and the swelling was already of generous size.

Red turned with the lantern and began an examination. There was a pile of blankets further back in the shadow, and there, securely roped, he found Ellen Wyley.

She seemed dazed and thoroughly frightened. She blinked at the lantern light, and then closed her eyes tightly.

"Hyah, pardner," said Red.

HE hunched down a little, illuminating his face with the lantern. Her eyes had snapped open and she was staring at him.

"You?" she breathed.

"Why not?" he asked gently.

"But they—they said you were dead."

"They?" queried Red.

"Blake—and the others. They said they killed you on the cliff, and that—that they would give the buzzards a feast."

"So it was Ben Blake, eh? Well, I figured it out myself. But why did they bring you here? Wait—I'll cut yuh loose."

Red slashed the bonds and helped Ellen to her feet.

"My ankle!" she gasped. "I hurt it—coming in. They didn't have anything to put on it."

"Broken?" asked Red.

"It is just a sprain, I guess, but it hurts."

Red picked her up in his arms and carried her to the front of the cave, where he sat her on the ledge.

"Where is Jose?" she asked.

"Oh, the guard? Well, I rocked him to sleep, ma'am. I—well, didja ever see such hair on a dog? He's gone!"

Evidently Jose had recovered, slipped over the shelf of rock and made his escape. Red looked all around, but the man was gone.

"He's shore had a hard head," he declared. "Well, we can't help it. How are yuh feelin'?"

"I am all right, except that ankle, Mr.—"

"Just Red."

"My name is Ellen."

"What's yore right name, Ellen?" he asked.

"That is my right name."

"What's yore last name?"

"Wyley—Ellen Wyley."

"Well, yuh might as well be honest with me," he said soberly. "Here we are, tucked away in a hole in the rock. You've got a bad ankle, and I'm supposed to be dead. There's a devil's crew in Encinas that never want us out of here alive—so let's be honest."

"But, Red, I am honest. My name is Ellen Wyley."

"Have your own way about it, young lady; but—well, I never told yuh that the Chinese cook at the Lazy A gave me the note yuh left there for Dave Kelly."

"Dave Kelly never got it?"

"Dave Kelly was shot in this cañon and is under the care of the doctor. No, he never got that letter, but I did."

"Thank God!" she exclaimed quietly. "Ben Blake forced me to write it. He swore he would kill me, unless I wrote it."

"Then you are really Ellen Wyley?"

"Of course. But what could I do?"

Red rolled and lighted a cigarette.

"Don't you believe me?" she asked.

"Shore I believe yuh. Damn it, it all connects up right. Blake tried to have you killed in a holdup on the grade the night you came. But I shot his brother, and he has to make the best of it."

"You think he intended to have those robbers kill me?" she asked.

"That's right. But why are they holdin' you here?"

"Because of my signature. Mr. Kelly has a copy of it. No one else signs my name like I do, and Blake is afraid Mr. Kelly might prove the difference. He promised not to harm me, but I know he lies. I know you are an impostor, Red. Blake told me you were. They promised you twenty-five thousand dollars, but he said all you would ever get was a bullet."

"An old Blake custom," Red sighed. "Do yuh know I believe Blake killed your uncle and Reko, the foreman. I believe he went out to the coast to pull that job, and to steal the money they got from cattle. I can't prove it, of course, but I can believe it."

"I believe it, too," Ellen said quickly. "Mr. Blake told me that I was the last of the Blake clan. He told me that he and Jim Archer had been enemies for years, but that he had fixed that. He said he had waited years to get even with Jim Archer. But he did promise to take me to Apache Springs and let me go home. Later, he told me that if I would sign any papers they brought me, he would see that I got home safely. Now I know he lied."

"Ben Blake," said Red, "may not be the biggest liar on earth, but he'll do until a bigger one comes along. How's the ankle feelin'?"

"I had forgotten it," she said. But she tested it on the rocky floor, and winced from the pain.

"Kinda tough," Red admitted. "I

can't carry yuh over that trail in the dark. Mebbe we can get an early start at daylight and make it."

"Isn't there any other way out?" asked Ellen anxiously.

"I'm afraid there ain't," replied Red. He picked up the rifle and examined it closely. There was a cartridge in the chamber and two in the magazine.

"This is a thirty-eight-fifty-five caliber," he told her, "and I'll bet that this is the rifle that killed the stage driver. It's a wonder Blake didn't kill me, when he knew I had killed his brother."

"He thinks you are dead. They were sure of it."

"They may feel different when that hard-headed Mexican reports to 'em. Well, I suppose we might as well make up our mind to stay here until daylight. I've got three shots, if it comes to a battle. We'll try soakin' your ankle, if there's any water in that big canteen."

"Jose brought some just before dark," said Ellen.

RED found an old towel, which he soaked in water and bound it around the ankle, keeping it soaked from the canteen. It relieved the pain at once. Ellen confessed that she had been too frightened to sleep or eat. Red made some coffee and opened a can of baked beans, which seemed to be about all there was in the larder.

Ellen told Red about her struggles to keep going, after her mother died, finally qualifying as a grammar school teacher in Indio, where nearly everyone was Mexican or Indian.

"I never knew much about Jim Archer," she told Red. "My pay was barely enough to live on, and I did so want to make money. When I was notified that I would probably inherit the Lazy A ranch, it seemed like a dream might come true, but now I don't know."

"But you've still got a job," remarked Red.

"No, I haven't. I had to give it up in order to come here. Now I will have a hard job landing another school in the fall. I—I guess I was born to bad luck."

"I haven't split the world wide open myself," Red said. "I never thought much about makin' big money. Yuh see, I'm sort of a fool with money. Every time I make a few dollars I play poker. Money won't never do me any good, I don't reckon."

"I—I hope you make a lot of it, Red," she said. "I think you are fine."

"Well, gosh!" grunted Red. "Yuh know, Ellen, there's a lot of difference in girls. I've kinda been scared of 'em. No, that's a honest fact. But I'm not scared of you. When you tripped on that car step and I caught yuh—well, I wasn't scared. Funny thing. And I—I was glad you had an idea I was comin' down to Encinas on that stage, so I came. Didn't have any idea of comin', until you mentioned it."

"Well, I liked you, too, Red. Your smile reminded me of Jimmy, and I—"

"Jimmy?" queried Red quickly.

"Jimmy Carson," said Ellen. "Jimmy is the telegraph operator at Indio. He is crippled, Red. Jimmy isn't very big and strong. We—that is, Jimmy wanted to marry me. He needs an operation on his leg. The doctors say he can be cured, but it costs money. Jimmy doesn't get a big salary. I suppose he is wondering why he doesn't hear from me."

Red rubbed out the light from his cigarette and proceeded to roll a fresh one. From far off on the cañon rim a coyote chorus filled the cañon with weird sounds. Ellen shuddered slightly. Red said:

"You could—you and Jimmy could do somethin' about his leg, if yuh got the Lazy A. He wouldn't have to work, and you wouldn't have to look for a job. Yuh know, sometimes a dream might come true."

He carried her back to the blankets and told her to get some sleep, while he stood guard. Then he went back to the shelf again and sat down to smoke and wait. The moon peeped over the cañon, silvering the rugged walls. He did not expect any attack at night, but it was good to be able to watch that cañon floor.

"It's shore a funny old world," he said, half aloud. "I might have known there would be a Jimmy. Little feller, with a bum leg that needs fixin'."

He dug into his pocket and drew out the Archer pocket-piece, looking at it under the rays of the moon. And then, with a flip of his wrist he sent it spinning down into the cañon. It flashed for a moment, and then he heard it tinkle on a rock, far below him.

"I hope Ben Blake heard that," he muttered, as he reached for his tobacco and cigarette papers.

Up on the cañon rim the coyote chorus started again. Brush crackled down on the cañon floor, and Red heard the snarl of a baffled wild-cat which had missed its supper. Red smiled slowly and lighted his smoke.

"I reckon we're all alike, coyotes, bobcats or humans—squawk when we lose."

RED sat there all night, and at the first sign of dawn he went back and awakened Ellen, who had slept well, in spite of the hard rock bed.

"I'm sorry," he told her, "but I've plumb got to pack you out of here. We'd be like rats in a trap, especially after my three shells were gone. Anyway, we might fool 'em."

Ellen found that her ankle was still too painful and weak to bear her weight; so Red picked her up in his arms, took the rifle and went back to the ledge.

"Lean in toward the cliff as much as yuh can," he told her, "but don't touch it, 'cause it might unbalance me. Ready?"

"Yes, I'm ready," she replied. "I'll do as you say, Red."

"That's fine. Now don't get scared. It ain't over a hundred feet to where we can climb down."

But Red had underestimated Ben Blake and his crew, as far as being on the job early was concerned. He was about midway of the narrow ledge, where a deep fissure extended inward for several feet, when a volley of bullets splattered around them, and the cliffs echoed the shots like a roll of thunder. Some of the bullets were so close that rock-dust splattered his face.

Red slipped and nearly went off the ledge, but shoved Ellen into the fissure and fell in against her. Bullets screamed off the rocks around them, but the angle of the fissure gave them a fair amount of cover. The shots were all coming from down the cañon, and Red knew that just as soon as one of the attackers could work his way directly across the cañon from them they would be trapped in the fissure, and under direct fire.

"Scared?" he asked Ellen, as he twisted around, examining the sights on the rifle.

Her nose was bleeding from a small cut, caused by a rock splinter, but she smiled at him.

"Of course," she replied. "Who wouldn't be frightened? Aren't you?"

"Well, I hope to tell yuh! One time I bet sixty dollars, after standin' pat on a pair of deuces, and the—oh-oh!"

Red's body tensed and the rifle came slowly to his shoulder. A man was nearly across from them, snaking his way among the boulders near the edge of the slide-rock.

"Imagine wearin' a white shirt," muttered Red. The man raised up, apparently searching the cliffs for them. Red's cheek cuddled against the rifle stock and he squeezed the trigger.

The report blasted back from the opposite cliffs, but the man in the white shirt did not hear it, because he was draped across the boulder.

"It's too bad we ain't got more shells," said Red.

"Did—did you hit him?" asked Ellen fearfully.

"I either hit him or he's a sun worshiper," replied Red dryly.

The rest of the attackers, evidently infuriated by Red's marksmanship, smashed bullet after bullet across the fissure, while the two covered their faces against flying dust and rock splinters.

"Mad at us," grinned Red, sneezing from the dust. He looked high on the opposite side, where a turn of the grade jutted over the cañon. Two tiny figures on horseback were up there, plainly etched in the morning light. They had heard the shooting in the cañon.

"That's Hank Elliott and Yuma Johnson, the sheriff and deputy!" he exclaimed. "Hank's ridin' his black horse and Yuma's on the pinto."

The shooting had ceased. Perhaps the attackers had also seen the two officers high on the grade. Red realized that the

two officers could not see them in that crevice; so no ordinary signal would attract their attention. In desperation, Red lifted his rifle, aimed high and to the left of the two riders, and pulled the trigger. Evidently his aim was good, the bullet striking the rocky wall behind them, because the two riders whirled their horses and raced down the grades toward Encinas.

"But why did you shoot at them, Red?" Ellen gasped.

Red smiled grimly, as he levered in his last cartridge.

"I made 'em mad," he said. "I wasn't shootin' *at* 'em, Ellen—but they're headin' for the entrance to Lobo Cañon. Blake and his murderers will either have to get out fast, or dispose of the law—and I'm bettin' they're headin' for open ground right now."

"Suppose they kill the two officers—what then?" asked Ellen.

"Too bad for us," replied Red. "But Hank Elliott and Yuma Johnson are too smart to run their neck into a trap. They'll be lookin' for the party who smashed a bullet into the rock behind 'em."

The cañon was quiet now. Far down the cañon rim was a faint film of smoke-like dust, which marked the passing of the two officers. Across the cañon, still draped across the rock, was the white-shirted body of the man who had tried to get an open shot at them.

Red exposed his hat around the corner of the fissure, but without any result. Then he leaned out, taking a dangerous chance, but no shots were fired. It was possible that they were waiting for Red and the girl to come out into the open, but Red did not think so. Those men had either headed for the cañon entrance to make a getaway, or to dry-gulch the two officers. Red said to Ellen:

"You stay right here until I get back. No use of takin' too many long chances. We need a horse to take us out of here, and I'm horse-huntin'."

Without waiting for a reply, he stepped out on the narrow ledge and headed swiftly toward the broken trail ahead. As he leaped from the ledge to the top of a flat rock, a bullet splattered the wall behind him, and Red went flat on his face, the rifle clutched in his hands.

THE shooter must have thought he had centered Red with that shot, because he broke from the brush and came running in the open. Red had slipped the rifle from under him, lifted up on one elbow and shoved the rifle butt against his shoulder. The man saw him and jerked to a stop, lifting his rifle quickly. The 38-55 report rattled the cañon walls again, and Red got slowly to his feet. He climbed down the rest of the way and walked out to the man. Red had seen him with Bill Colton, and knew that he had been one of Colton's riders.

Red took his gun belt, along with a nearly-new 30-30 carbine, and headed down the cañon, where he found a saddled sorrel in a thicket of brush. Ellen was waiting anxiously for him, not knowing the answer to the two rifle shots. He picked her up in his arms and managed to carry her back to the horse, avoiding the body of the dead cowboy.

The horse did not like the idea of having a woman on its back, nor did it want to carry double, but there was no room for it to buck in that jumble of rocks and brush. Red knew the way out, and he lost no time. Near the entrance they ran squarely into Hank Elliott and Yuma Johnson. In a few short words Red told them what had happened in the cañon, and the officers looked incredulously at the young cowboy.

"Ben Blake and Bill Colton, eh?" muttered the sheriff. "And you gunned up two of their men. I'll be a liar! And the man yuh shot at that holdup was Jim Blake? By golly, I don't sabe this deal, Red."

"The thing to do," suggested Yuma, "is to quit actin' surprised and head for town. Blake and Colton will bluff it through, if they can, and Red ain't got a shred of proof except his word and the girl's."

"You fellows go to town," said Red. "Make a lot of fuss about bein' shot at from the cañon, and can't find the shooter. Yuh didn't go into the cañon, *sabe?* If Colton and Blake are in town, I'll make 'em eat dirt."

"All right," agreed the sheriff. "Can yuh describe the last man yuh shot?"

"That's Al Clayton's six-gun he's got," said Yuma. Red's description fitted Al Clayton exactly. Then the two officers spurred swiftly back to the Encinas road, leaving Ellen and Red to ride slowly.

Ben Blake and Bill Colton were both in the Encinas Saloon when the two officers arrived in town, but none of their men were along. There was also quite a crowd in the saloon, and they listened closely to the sheriff's story of being shot at from Loco Cañon.

"Why didn't yuh go and get the dirty dry-gulcher?" asked Blake.

"We started to go down there," replied the sheriff. "Somethin' awful funny about the whole deal. Yuh see, we found the dead body of Al Clayton, Blake. We heard a couple more shots in the cañon, oh, mebbe fifteen, thirty minutes before we could get around to the mouth. Then we found Clayton. There wasn't no sign of his horse and he didn't have any gun."

"Al Clayton?" queried Blake. "Somebody shot Al? Why, damn 'em, I'll never give up until I get that dirty killer!"

"Sounds like rustlers to me," said Colton. "Mebbe Al ran into 'em and they cut down on him. Yuh didn't see nor hear anybody?"

"If there was rustlers in the cañon, why would they take a shot at me and Hank?" queried Yuma. "Yore brother usually rode with Al, didn't he, Ben?"

"Jim went to Apache Springs two, three days ago," said Ben Blake. "He said he might go on over into New Mexico for a spell."

"Anybody seen that feller Red Archer lately?" asked the sheriff.

"He went out to the Lazy A yesterday," informed Colton. "Said he was goin' to stay out there. Yuh don't suppose he was mixed up in this, do yuh?"

"Yuh might ask him—personally," replied the sheriff.

Everyone was so interested in the conversation that none of them, except the sheriff and deputy, saw Red saunter in and move up close to the end of the bar. Red's face was streaked with blood from rock splinters, his shirt ripped in places. There was a streak of dried blood on his shoulder, where that first bullet had broken the skin. He wore the belt and gun belonging to Al Clayton.

His eyes narrowed, as he watched Blake and Colton, who were shocked to inaction for the moment. Somebody whispered huskily:

"He's got Al Clayton's belt and gun!"

"They left him behind to get me," said Red quietly, his lips hardly moving. "They wanted to save their own skin from the law. There's a man in a white shirt, draped over a rock in the cañon. I dunno who he is. They got Blake's brother's body. But I got the girl, and she's safe, Blake—safe from you and your damned murderers. You never overlook anythin', do yuh? Well, you poor fool, you overlooked—me!"

"He's crazy," Blake whispered. "Ravin' crazy, I tell yuh. I don't know what he's talkin' about."

"Clayton talked before he died," Red lied. "Dyin' men tell the truth. But I knew it before he told me. Blake, you murdered Jim Archer and Reko, and stole that money they got—"

Ben Blake was a big slow-moving hulk of a man, but there was nothing slow about the way he reached for his gun. But Red anticipated the move, and drew a fraction of a second ahead of Blake. They were only a few feet apart, and Red shot from the hip—once—twice. Blake's shot tore a hole in the floor between Red's feet. Two men were going down at the same time, as Yuma Johnson smashed Bill Colton over the head with his six-shooter when Bill drew with homicidal intent.

"Set 'em up in the other alley!" Yuma grunted. The crowd, shocked at the swiftness of it all, backed up, looking at Blake and Colton. Red, white-lipped, leaned against the bar, a weary-looking young man.

"Well, that's that," he said slowly. Someone ran to get the doctor. Someone said, "Here's that girl!"

RED turned to find Ellen, white-faced, at his side, staring at the two men on the floor.

"It's all right," he told her. The doc-

tor was across the street, and he came immediately.

Blake was conscious, cursing bitterly, as the doctor shifted him around to make an examination.

"Let me alone," he said. "No use for a doctor. Where's—oh, there yuh are!"

He had caught sight of Ellen and Red.

"All right, Red," he said painfully. "You don't win, damn yuh! I want everybody to hear it. This man is not Len Archer. He has no claim on the Lazy A. He's an impostor, damn him. I hired him to—to—"

Ben Blake sank back. The doctor examined him quickly.

"He might have lived, had he been careful," he said quietly.

"Yeah—that's right," agreed Red. "But you've still got Colton. He's about as guilty as Blake. They was in cahoots. Ellen Wyley can tell yuh what yuh want to know. Blake planned to have her murdered in a stage robbery by his brother, but I got his brother. He kidnaped her, after forcin' her to write that she was an impostor. He was goin' to bring in another girl to take her place and then murder her, too. He was my idea of a bad boy, folks."

The crowd was silent for several moments. Finally the sheriff said;

"Then you *are* an impostor?"

"You heard what Blake said," replied Red. Ellen was leaning against the bar crying softly. Red turned and put a hand on her shoulder.

"Don't do that," he said gently. "Don'tcha see, you can send for Jimmy —now. Nothin' on earth can ever stop yuh from ownin' the Lazy A. Yuh can have money for that operation—and all that."

Then he turned to the sheriff.

"I can't stay here," he said, "but I'd like to ask yuh a favor."

"All right, Red—anythin' yuh ask."

"Can I borrow a horse to ride to Apache Springs?"

"Yuh shore can—take mine," interposed Yuma. "You may be a damned fake, Red, but you can have half of anythin' I've got. The horse is that pinto out yonder at the hitch-rack."

"I'll leave him at the livery stable," said Red, "and thank yuh a lot, Yuma. "Good evenin', folks."

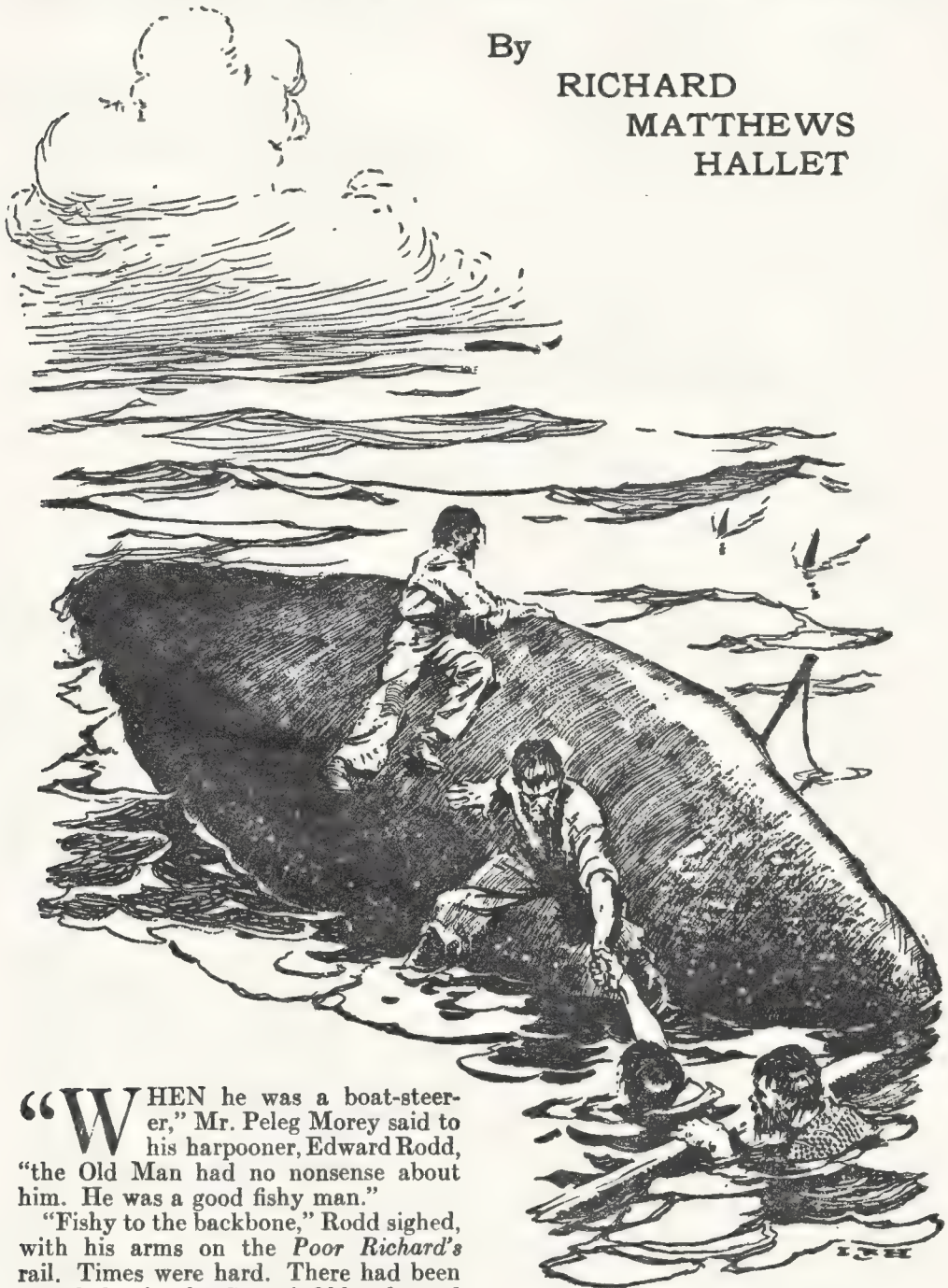
Red walked wearily out of the saloon and mounted the pinto. A crowd gathered on the sidewalk to watch him ride away. Several waved a farewell, but Red did not look back at Encinas. He reached the grades along Lobo Cañon and finally came to the spot where the stage had been held up. He drew rein near the edge of the canon and looked into the blue depths. Above him a flock of buzzards circled widely on motionless wings.

For a long time Red sat there, deep in thought. Then, with a sigh of weariness, he reached inside the collar of his shirt and drew out a fine gold chain, on which dangled a replica of the medal taken from Jim Archer. But this one was newer, and made of gold. For several moments Red held it in his hand, looking at it intently. Then he flung it far out into the cañon, where it sparkled for a moment in the sunlight and was gone forever. With a twisted smile on his lips, Red Snow rode on.

QUESTION
Which are the only cough drops containing Vitamin A?
(CAROTENE)
ANSWER

SATURDAY'S WHALE

By
RICHARD
MATTHEWS
HALLET



"Climb up along of me —an' watch out for sharks!"

"WHEN he was a boat-steerer," Mr. Peleg Morey said to his harpooner, Edward Rodd, "the Old Man had no nonsense about him. He was a good fishy man."

"Fishy to the backbone," Rodd sighed, with his arms on the *Poor Richard's* rail. Times were hard. There had been no whales in the Sea of Okhotsk, and there were no whales here, except on Sundays; and Captain Barzillai Sears

drew the line at Sunday whaling. The missionary girl at Honolulu had evidently made a bargain with him.

"Six Sundays running we have sighted whales," Peleg mourned, "and what does he do? Goes below and puts his nose into 'Clark's Commentaries.' Only necessary jobs on Sundays, says he."

"Sunday ships have made good voyages," Rodd consoled him.

The bow-legged mate muttered, "Why, so they have. And so there's little Miss Honeywell back in New Bedford born without hands and only three toes on her left foot, and she excels in the embroidery of flowers. Yes, sir, and there's Master Nellis, born without arms, and he can cut out paper likenesses, shoot a bow and arrow and play on a cello with his toes. But it ain't the rule, and the Old Man knows it."

Peleg stared gloomily at the horizon, where the bark *Happy Couple*, Captain Frank Teach, was boiling out the blubber of a Sunday-killed whale. Black imps with prongs and ladles danced round the try-pots and threw scraps on the back-arches. They were boiling oil, and they were happy. Every time the order "Away cask" was shouted, they were so much nearer home.

"The better the day, the better the deed, I say," said Rodd.

He felt himself playfully butted from behind.

"Pipe down, Bimelech," Peleg commanded.

Bimelech was Peleg's goat, taken in trade in Mozambique Channel from a bare-legged queen in a pink satin hat.

Edward Rodd hung his big shoulders over the mate, and whispered, "I think the Old Man's going to call a survey on the goat, one of these days. He never did think a goat was anything but bad luck."

"He will have to put the knife into my ribs first," Peleg said fiercely, and went below.

The cook spoke musically to Rodd from the galley door.

"Seem like dat little goat know the ship's predicament. Seem like he side with the mate too, seem like he do."

"He *looks* like the mate," Rodd said benignly.

"Awful kind of human look to dat goat, sure," the cook insinuated.

"Kind of a look of a goat to the mate," Rodd said.

"Bimelech, he's a human goat. Yassuh. *Might* be human. I dunno how come—I seen a human horse once in Zanzibar—had been a man and now he was a horse, yassuh—smoke him a pipe."

Below decks, Captain Barzillai Sears kept on writing up his Sunday log, while Peleg Morey spoke.

"The nubbin of it is, Captain, the men have no quarrel with a temperance ship. What they can't abide is being classed with the ultra-Christians, and no chasing whales on Sunday when they only *see* whales on Sunday. We've sighted pods of whales six Sundays running, and not a spout on week-days. And some of the green hands, like Tilley the glass-blower, have got girls back home who are members of that society where they take oath not to unite in the silken bonds of matrimony with any man that hasn't been a party to killing a whale."

"That will do, Mr. Morey. If you and your men had half the eye for whales you've got for women on the beach, we'd cut in whales enough."

Peleg withdrew darkly. He confided to his own log, "I just told the captain what was what, and he sat with a face like a leather judgment. The cast-iron gall of him accusing *me* of casting sheep's eyes at the women. If he calls a survey on the goat, that will be the last straw. Same bad bread and worse beef composes our dish of delightfuls here. We are nothing better than a heterogeneous mass of incongruity thrown together by chance and willing to part without tears, and this Old Man knows it, if he has the wit of a ship's louse."

The voyage was going about as well as you could pull a cat by its tail. The *Poor Richard* leaked two hundred strokes a watch; first she was knocked on one side by a souther, and then on the other side by a norther, and not so much as a breather in between. It blew a perfect blister of wind, and now the water was too rugged to whale, even if they sighted whales. A sea pooped her, stove in the cabin windows, and knocked her name-board off.

"We are a thing without a name now," Peleg wrote in his log. "The captain says she leaks just enough to keep her sweet. It's enough to make a man willing to sell himself for a trifle."

TWO days of sky and water followed, without a single spout.

"It's a miserable pastime, staring your eyes out looking for that which never was lost, namely whales," Peleg confided to his smooth log.

His beard was ragged, his red shirt was patched with a patch on a patch and a patch over that, and he stroked Bimelech's beard to keep a grip on his sanity. On the title page of his log-book, the god Neptune confronted a voluptuous mermaid, and Peleg touched in scales adown her flank with pen-and-ink, to steady his nerves.

Captain Barzillai wrote in his own log, "Whales are shy as island girls lately. And it will be sharp work to get onto a whale hereabouts, even if one shows his head, with the men ready to jump down my throat on account of Sunday discipline. If ever I come a-whaling again, it will be after this."

Certainly the omens were dark. Once, in the middle of the week, they saw whales going quickly to windward, eyes out; but then it fell flat calm, and night swallowed their chances. In the morning, they saw whales and fastened, but the irons drew. Then they killed a whale, but it sank as soon as dead. Next, it was Sunday again, and they saw whales, whole pods of them, while Captain Barzillai was holding services.

John Tilley, the glass-blower, cried under his breath prayerfully, "There blows . . . there blows . . . there blows," and the moon-faced tub-oarsman, Jimmy Squarefoot moaned, "Whereaway?"

Captain Barzillai's eyes showed frightful white all round, and the murmurs were hushed.

"The devil of gain in the end troubleth his own house," the captain read.

Juan, the Spanish bullock-hunter, stirred under his poncho, and pointed a finger at the topsails of the *Hydaspe*, shooling in their wake.

Shooling. That had meant in the beginning, shoveling, or road-scraping; scraping something flat along the ground, like dragging the feet; and so on, in the whalers' jargon, to idling, sponging, acquiring an advantage by under-handed means.

Already the distant whaler was backing his main yard, and getting ready to lower his boats, when by all the laws of whaling, this whale should be the *Poor Richard's*. Captain Barzillai's stern voice went jogging on, "Godliness is profitable for all things, both as having promise for this life and for the life to come." The *Hydaspe's* boats sailed down on the whale with their jibs ballooning, guyed out on the ends of the bow oars.

"That's a hundred barrel bull," Rodd whispered to Peleg Morey.

The mate groaned. "Oh, how it will shorten that ship's voyage."

Suddenly the goat Bimelech interrupted the captain's voice with a short snicker. Barzillai glared. The goat had eaten one pair of his Morocco shoes already, and now Peleg Morey saw that it was liable to lose its life. He grasped it by the beard and pulled it behind him. The lucky *Hydaspe* sank into blue distance.

That night, by the fitful light of a blubber-room lamp hanging from a beam, Peleg Morey wrote, "Sunday again. He who made it is Lord of it, we got no whales." I am afraid Bimelech's day is done. He will find a tomb in a shark's stomach if this Old Man has his way. Captain not enjoying his religion, and his own children, if he had any, would stand no better chance than this poor goat, whose beard he has set and stroked by the hour, as I have seen with my own eyes."

HE SLEPT fitfully. At dawn he came on deck in time to hear Barzillai cry out, "Keep a sharp lookout aloft there," to the man mast-headed in the foretop-gallant cross-trees. It was Juan, the bullock-hunter, with silver bells on the slashed seams of his pantaloons.

"There blows . . . there blows . . . there blows," Juan yelled.

"Whereaway?"

"Three points on the starboard bow."

"Sing out. Sing out every time," Barzillai cried.

"There she blows and breaches too. . . . There she lobtails. . . . There . . . goes . . . flukes."

"Drop the boats."

Peleg Morey's boat was first in the water. Ned Rodd had the harpooner's short oar, and Peleg, writhing at the twenty-foot steering-oar, cried, like a man out of his senses, "Oh, lay forward. Do spring, spring, my pretties. Pull, girls, pull. Pull all you know. Oh, lay me on. Quiet now. No noise. Set me on that whale," he whimpered hoarsely. "Look at him. He lies like an island. I tell you, he's slow as night. He's an old schoolmaster."

"He's got a back like a ten-acre lot," Ned Rodd called back happily.

"Lay me on," Peleg moaned. "Now—hold water. Hold water, I say. . . Harpooner, stand up. Give it to him, you sir. Now, when he rounds his back."

The ship-keeper of the *Poor Richard* cried down excitedly to Barzillai, from the main-rigging. "She's stove. My god, Captain, the mate's boat is stove!"

"He wasn't set on properly," Barzillai growled. "Count heads now. One, two, three, four, five. And there's the tub-oarsman showing his head. Six. The second mate's boat is going for them. If I get oil this voyage, it'll be because a whale trips across my path."

The whale's white-water boiled at Peleg's throat.

"Lash three oars athwart her to keep her from barreling," he choked at Rodd, who was just struggling through foam. "Hoist a shirt on a lance-pole."

"Where's the shirt?" Rodd gasped. "Watch out for sharks, is my advice."

"Here comes the second mate's boat."

They were hauled in dripping by the slack of their pants.

When they got back to the *Poor Richard's* side, Captain Barzillai was no wellspring of endearments.

"Stove to tooth-picks, aren't you?"

"Oven-wood, Captain," Peleg confessed, and wrung out his beard. "That was the limberest whale I ever put an iron into. He clipped the starn off the boat neat with his flukes as you could do it with a saw."

Bimelech snickered, and now it was Peleg's turn to glare.

"It's enough to transmogrify a man," he said sheepishly.

Barzillai said blackly, "I guess it will take four carpenters to keep you in boats, mister, and four nurses to nurse you out of your troubles. Wood to skin was what I wanted. Wood to black-skin. If you had got the boat's keel in the whale's fin before you threw the dart, she'd never have been able to lay a fluke on you. But no, not you. That was too much of a brain-lift for you, wasn't it?"

"There wasn't time," Peleg pleaded. "He suspicioned us. I saw him roll his eye and stop spouting, so't he could listen to the oars."

"Yes, and you saw him move his ears, I guarantee," the captain jeered. "What I'll do hereafter, I'll have me three or four bricks put into your boat, Mr. Morey. Then you throw a brick at a whale when you get close enough. If he says nothing, you can dart an iron, but if he shows kick, you pull for the ship. I've got a mind to bundle you forward with the crew for this, sir."

"Put me forward, then," Peleg shouted with consuming bitterness.

"You don't have cradle knowledge," Brazillai accused.

And he shoved with the flat of his hand against the mate's shoulder.

"You struck me," Peleg affirmed with glazing eyes.

"Struck you, did I? I ought to have tapped you with a maul. And then I wouldn't know what to do with you, I swear. Maybe you could find a tomb in a shark's stomach, Mr. Morey."

"So privacy has gone by the board along with everything else," Peleg roared. "Nothing is sacred on this ship."

It was mid-afternoon before he felt calm enough to post his log. Then, inking in the margin the perpendicular flukes of a whale diving, to mark the regrettable loss, he wrote painfully:

"Saturday. Middle part clear. Mate's boat stove, setting on a whale. At 3 P. M. after my rescue from a watery grave, the captain struck me on the quarter-deck before my men, for no good reason."

He left the log defiantly open, and in his absence, Barzillai wrote in a massive

fist, opposite this last statement, "A lie, as the writer well knows."

But now another cry from the masthead put everything out of their heads but whales.

"I'LL try my own hand this time, Mr. Morey," Captain Barzillai said. "I leave the ship in your hands. Are the lines all in the boats, Mr. Tarr?"

"All in the tubs, sir."

"Swing the cranes, then, and lower."

The stroke oarsman, Anton, came shouldering a last keg of water, and Jimmy Squarefoot looked to see if there was bread under the stern-sheets. The boat smacked against blue water.

"Capsize the after block."

Mr. Tarr, coming round under the ship's counter in the second boat, hung to his steering-oar and bending the lobe of his ear forward, sagged his mouth well open to catch the Old Man's accents.

"We'll take him head and head."

"Take him head and head, sir."

"And if we don't strike this rising—"

"I know sir. Spread our chances."

Captain Barzillai settled away at his steering-oar.

"Scratch hard, boys," he exhorted. "Don't let the second mate's boat pass you. Right on—right on now for his fin. There he spouts. Think of the yellow shiners, lads, and bend your backs. Wood to skin, remember. Hold your hand now, way enough. Peak your oars, and take your paddles. Soft now. Hold water. Hold her so, hold her so. Now, harpooner, throw the blacksmith shop into him."

The boat's keel ran against the slimy wrinkled and barnacled back of an old bull, arching himself sleepily out of the water. His blubber was stretched tight, and Ned Rodd had only to let the weight of the dog-wood shaft carry the harpoon in to the socket.

"There goes—flukes," said Peleg Morey, from the ship's quarter deck. "The boat's up-ended," he added grimly. "There's two of them tumbled in the water. Cooper, is that the captain up to his neck?"

"Capting's still in the boat," Jake Spiller said.

Barzillai was still at his oar, and Ned Rodd and Jimmy Squarefoot were clinging to the thwarts. The whale had sounded, going down deep, and the line smoked around the loggerhead.

"Here he comes, junk and jaw," Barzillai yelled with his hair flying and his hat floating away.

"Shall I cut, sir?" Rodd screamed, flashing a knife.

"What do you want to cut for? We're just harnessed."

"We ain't all here."

"Tarr's picked 'em up," Barzillai said, with a quick look over his shoulder.

The whale came up perpendicularly, jaws open, and fell back with a thunderous souse. The whale-boat forged ahead, and the whale drove fast into the sinking sun. Solid water lipped in astern.

Jimmy Squarefoot bailed like mad. He turned saucer eyes on Ned Rodd, who had let out twenty or thirty more fathoms of his line.

"Does he show a bloody flag yet?" Barzillai yelled at Rodd, who bent low and stared; but already it was too dark to distinguish blood from water.

"I can't see the ship," Jimmy Squarefoot said fearsomely.

"Squall of rain veiled her. Set the boat-lantern on its pole," Barzillai said.

"Now she shows. There's the old barkey," Squarefoot said. "She's got two lights in the rigging and a flare astern. She's gone again," he added dismally.

Rain fell in ramrods.

"It's coming on black," Jimmy Squarefoot said.

"Black as Salem tunnel, but I won't let go," Barzillai said, hugging his oar. "I'll skin that whale's back. I'll see his heart's blood with a hogwhip before I cut the line, Rodd."

"His tongue's getting flabby," the harpooner shrieked, through wind and spray. "Now we got him in the sweat-table. No, we've lost him, Captain," he ended dismally. "Here's the iron coming in."

"Drawed, by gorramighty. Whale's absquatulated, has he?" Barzillai said. "Oh my God, blessed are those who expect nothing, because they won't be disappointed."

"Whale loose?" Jimmy Squarefoot

asked, and bobbed up his pathetic moon-face from the tub's edge.

"You, Johnny-come-lately, you have asked questions enough for one rising," Barzillai said. "Hand the bread out from the stern-sheets and fleet it forward. Put the drug over, Rodd, and bring her head to sea."

NIGHT came down, black as a blind man's pocket, and the barkey's lights were nowhere seen. Slumped on the thwarts, they munched ship's biscuit softened with brine. Braced back to back, they watched fire-balls rolling in blue-black troughs; and the tub-oarsman thought that his bone-ends would strike out through his skin.

"I guess you wish now you was back lamp-lighter at the Bowery Theatre," Barzillai said. "Turn flukes and get some sleep. We've got nothing to pull for now."

Jimmy Squarefoot didn't aim to sleep; but sitting up suddenly he found the sun burning at the water's edge.

"There blows . . . there blows . . . there blows . . ." Ned Rodd was saying.

Barzillai's eye flamed under a lick of his black hair.

"Lash and carry," he ground out. "Rise and chime. Bear a hand here, my bulls, and see if we can't fasten."

Jimmy Squarefoot was staggered.

"It's Sunday morning, Captain," he murmured.

"There's no Sunday in better than ten fathom of water, I always heard," Ned Rodd said daringly. He touched the iron with his thumb. "Where's the harm in taking oil on Sunday, so long as you don't scratch 'Sunday' on the casks?"

"What'll we fall back on if we get stove?" poor Squarefoot babbled.

"Fall back on the barkey. There's her topsails now," Rod said, pointing to the east.

"Fall back on Sunday morning and necessary jobs, like our sow did that pigged last Sunday morning," Barzillai said harshly.

Then they saw that he had let go his religion at last with both hands.

"Do I put the irons in the crotch?"

"Put 'em in the crotch," their captain said mesmerically. "Line your oars, boys. Here's whales, lying heads and points. Lord, they shine like a glass bottle," he murmured lovingly. "Now, then, back to the thwarts. Give her the touch. Everything, everything I've got in my chest, I'll give ye, boys. Beef, beef, beef, on the oars. You thickheads of hell, bend the ash, why can't ye? Grit the front ends of your teeth off, and harness me a whale."

They lashed at it hard.

"Come, what are you, Jack or gentleman?" Barzillai crooned. "Pull, why can't ye? I could whip a toad through tar faster. There's six thousand dollars, eyes out, in bags, floating at the water's edge, and you won't stoop. Let's slice the crittur into Bible leaves—Ah, now I feel you," the captain cried encouragingly. "Come, smash the oars. Spring if you love gin, my livelies. Pile it on. Pull, every soul. I'll give ye my clothes, I tell ye. I'll skin myself naked."

"Oh now look at her. What a hump," Rodd slavered.

"Don't you get gallied—don't you look round, any of you," Barzillai ordered. "She's a hundred barrel bull—she's sparm—an old plutarch. There she mills. Now she's heading to leeward. She's drifting away from the rest of the shoal. Pull or she'll nose us down like a hog knocking over his feed-trough. It's an eating whale, I vowny. Why the tarnation don't you pull?"

Barzillai hugged the steering-oar in a frenzy. In the imploring tones of a man at his last gasp, he whispered throatily:

"I tell you we are jam onto him. It's the same whale we had last night. I can see where the iron drawed. One minute more. Boys, if you ever want to see your sweethearts, pull. Pull and shorten the voyage. Pull and shorten. Now we gain, now we're slap onto her. Harpooner, stand by. All my tobacco, I tell you, all my clothes, my shirt, my hat, my shoes. Lay back. All my clothes—a double share of grog, gin—we're in her wake, by glory. No noise. Stand up, harpooner. . . . Give it to her solid."

The raw breath of the whale's flank was on them, and Ned Rodd put the iron into the hitches.

"Now tarn all. Harpooner, come aft.

Wet the line, Squarefoot. Watch he don't throw his jaw out and muckle onto us. He's taking line. Now he's up. There he spouts."

A fine cool drizzle blew in their hot faces from the whale's spout. Ned Rodd threw his dart, but the whale rolled and rocked the boat and ruined his aim.

"Lay to leward," Rodd pleaded. "I've boned my lance. Now . . . haul me on again, and let me churn him."

The whale's flukes glanced along the boat's side, and hung dripping over the crew. Jimmy Squarefoot yelled and jumped into the sea, but the flukes passed under his heels and flipped him back into the boat.

"Give us a set on him," Ned Rodd was still crying.

Barzillai dropped the steering-oar and seized an iron. Then in a twinkling, the boat was stove. It was kindling, but Barzillai saw his chance. Up to his waist in water, he struck the lance in deep.

He had got it in the life at last. The whale's under-jaw shot up, and he brought his ash-colored body half out of the sea.

Barzillai yelled from the water's edge, "Back track, boys. He spouts blood thick as tar. There he clotters—there comes—Jonah!"

The whale fell back and rolled fin out and died with his head to the sun.

JIMMY SQUAREFOOT spluttered, "Is he dead, sir?"

"Dead, yes. Dead as a whistle. And he floats, that's the best part of him," his captain said cheerfully. "Lay hold of those oars, Squarefoot. Watch out for sharks. Here, climb up on the whale's back along of me."

Barzillai gave a hand to his men, one at a time, and dragged them out of the sea.

"Here's the old barkey coming up," Squarefoot said, shivering.

"This is Saturday's whale, ain't it, Captain?" Ned Rodd pleaded. "Oh, tell me this is Saturday's whale."

"Reason it," Barzillai commanded. They stood clinging to the shaft of the lance deep in the whale's back.

"What I say is, that whale-line was taut as a harp-string last night," Rodd reasoned. "If we had cut, we would just have sagged back into the jaws of the whale coming up astern."

"Right. And we got the iron into him first on Saturday, didn't we?"

"Saturday's the day, Captain."

"I construe him Saturday's whale," Barzillai said.

On the barkey's quarter-deck, or just abaft the main, Mr. Peleg Morey lowered his spy-glass. His Sunday get-up was formidable. He looked wooden and inaccessible in a green coat with palisaded collar, white duck pantaloons and low-quartered Morocco shoes. Bimelech, the goat, lowered his beard and sniffed new leather prayerfully.

Barzillai's Bible lay open on a deck-pulpit, and on top of the Bible was Peleg's log. He had just been writing in it, "Captain struck a whale on Saturday and followed him into Sunday."

Peleg Morey ran his eye over the ship's people gathered in the waist. Like himself, they looked neat and Sunday-sided.

"Mark you now," Peleg said. "We've been over this once, and we'll go over it again, for the benefit of thick skulls. Our Captain is a good man. He has killed whales on the Japan shore when not a Japanese could do it, and he has done floe-whaling in the Arctic. Now he's harnessed him a whale and he's coming on the back of it, as I can see. He will want to tie it up, even if he doesn't cut in, because the *Hydaspe* is coming up astern, and she will gaffle onto it if he doesn't. Is that plain?"

"Aye, aye, sir," the men murmured.

"But it so happens, it's Sunday. Now if he does cut in, or even if he ties up, on Sunday, that girl of his will give him the mitten. Because it ain't a necessary job. We can shorten sail, to keep canvas from blowing out of the bolt-ropes, and we can man the pumps, to keep the ship from sinking; but to cut it, or to tie up, or to crowd on more sail, that's forbidden by the English bishops and it's forbidden by the New Bedford preachers and the Honolulu missionaries. And we're a-going to tie up, men, and then there'll be one knot that the captain won't tie, and that's the knot he ties

with his teeth that he can't untie with his teeth. We're a-going to be shut of that girl this blessed Sunday."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Now you can back the main yard."

The barkey, just mousing through calm water, came alongside the whale. Captain Barzillai, with the blood-mark of a fresh kill on him, cast an eye up at the mighty blubber hook, three hundred pounds of it, hanging by chains from the main-top.

"Throw a heaving line," he barked.

Jake Spiller threw the line, and the captain came hand over hand, and stood barefooted on his own quarter-deck.

"Greased your lance, did you, Captain?" Peleg said respectfully. "Happen it was self-defense."

"It was pure self-defense, Mr. Morey."

"Looks like an eating whale, surely."

"That whale had us knocked into the middle of next week, and looking both ways for Sunday," said Barzillai. "It used our thwarts for tooth-picks."

"We better tie her up and cut her in," Peleg pursued smoothly. *Hydaspe's* showing her topsail on the port quarter."

The men looked down their noses and trifled with their Sunday ribbons. But Bimelech the goat took this time to snicker. That struck the pitch. The song of a bird may be enough to start an avalanche. Captain Barzillai seized the deck-pulpit in both hands.

"Square the yard and settle away," he said grimly. "Let go the whale, Mr. Morey."

"Let—go?"

"It's Sunday morning, and you've got my praying-tools laid out. Toll the bell for services."

"SERVICES, Captain?" Peleg babbled, agonized. "With Hackfield's ship shooling up astern, and a whale floating here, eyes out? Hadn't we better tie up first?"

"It's not a necessary job."

"It might be. It's removing a derelict from the path of a ship that might stub her cutwater over it and come to wreck," Peleg offered plausibly.

"That won't wash."

Peleg sided with his captain confidentially.

"Where's the harm, just so long as flying news don't come to a certain pair of shell-pink ears, Captain?"

"Toll the bell, I say."

"Mum's the word, that I guarantee, while this ship's company is made up of good men and true, like it shorely is," Peleg argued earnestly.

"Toll the bell. Get the men in Sunday ranks," Barzillai commanded.

There was a click of galloping hoofs, and Bimelech the goat rammed his captain in the stern transom. . . .

Barzillai Sears shot forward, pulpit and all, and stretched his mighty length on the deck. The wind was knocked completely out of him, but he still clutched Peleg's log, cracked wide open in both hands. As he got his wind back, his eyes widened. He had seen something on that inked page to knock his eyebrows up.

"Bimelech will have his little joke," Peleg was faltering. "You wouldn't hold it against a poor goat, Captain, that don't know his chin from his elbow?"

Barzillai got to his feet.

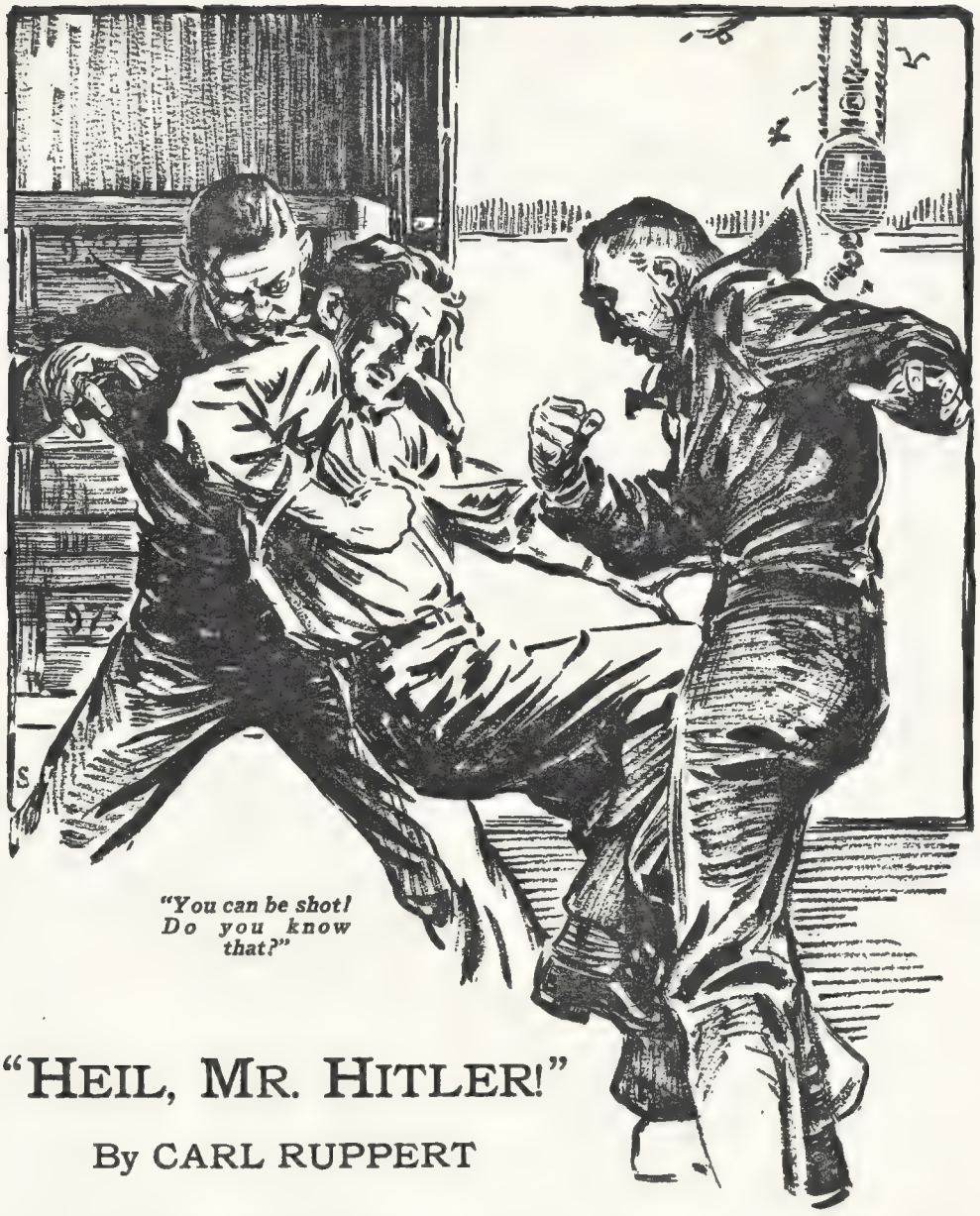
"Bimelech?" he roared. "Why, with all you namesakes standing round, it took a goat to show me the light. You can give him your shoes for his evening meal, Mr. Morey."

"My shoes, Captain?"

"Give him your shirt and shoes. Give him your tobacco. Give him gin. He's knocked sense into me from the outside, and that's the only kind of sense that counts. Turn the men to, Mr. Morey, and cut me in this whale."

"On Sunday, sir?"

"It's not Sunday. This blessed goat has knocked me back a day. Here, get the skin off your eyes and look for yourself. Here's your own log for proof. We crossed the 180th meridian last night. And going east. Have you forgotten, man? That's the international date-line that the nations of the world got together and agreed on last month. Going east we drop a day out, on account of what we've overtaken. Yesterday was Saturday and today is Saturday and I so construe it. Tie up and cut in. Prayers tomorrow at the usual hour."



"You can be shot! Do you know that?"

"HEIL, MR. HITLER!"

By CARL RUPPERT

EX-TORPEDOMAN KARL ZIMMERMAN, dishonorably discharged from the United States Navy, emerged from the Brooklyn Navy Yard and stopped to light a cigarette.

Well, anyhow, he was free. No more saluting, no more confinement in a ratty little light cruiser. He could do what he liked, go where he liked now.

He looked up and down the street and felt a small dismay in his heart. He had nowhere to go; he couldn't hang about the Yard. He couldn't go home; he had no home, no home but the Navy. His parents, kindly German folk, were dead—his father nine years ago when Karl, barely sixteen years old, worked as a garage mechanic in a small midwestern village to which they had brought him from Strassbourg, his birthplace, his mother barely four years ago.

She had been deeply upset when he joined the Navy. Like many other simple country folk, she thought the service in peace time was the resort of no-good bums who could not make a living in

the cities, but he had persuaded her he would learn more in his four-year hitch than he could pick up in the garage.

He had learned more too. He had learned how to be a good fitter, then how to be a good torpedoman. After his mother died he signed up for a second hitch, and in that hitch he had learned different things. He read badly printed little books that described the equality of man, and demanded to know why certain favored ones should receive salutes from the slaves of the lower decks.

"All men are equal," screamed the books. "The United States became a nation on that pledge. Demand your rights. Don't let your country drift into the capitalistic slavery of the nation from which you broke away. Look what they did in Russia, in Italy, in Spain, in Germany. Yes, in Germany one man, a humble corporal in the army, got all his fellow slaves together, drove the wealthy wasters out, and brought the country from ruin to proud prosperity."

Other pamphlets came to him secretly and pointed out that although he was a United States citizen, his veins were filled with the splendid Nordic blood of Germany. Why should he be ruled by men who carried the taint of half a dozen nations?

Fired with the messages from the little books, Karl preached to his mates with all the zeal of the neophyte. Sometimes he found converts, but eventually a general court-martial and dishonorable discharge.

He hoisted his belt and walked toward the subway. He was well out of it. A civilian again. He felt as good as anybody. He'd get himself a job and forget the service.

But that wasn't so easy. His eight protected years in the Navy had blinded him to the difficulty of getting jobs. There were plenty of good mechanics walking the streets and starving to death.

Oh well, there was always the merchant marine. He applied to a shipping agency.

"Papers?" demanded the shore super.

"Did seven years in the Navy," he mumbled. "Threw me out because I wouldn't let 'em ride me."

The superintendent glanced at him.

"Zimmerman, eh?" he asked.

"German descent, so what?"

"Nothing, chum," said the super.

"Okay. I get it." He wandered out.

FINE thing! He couldn't get a job because his father's name was German. What of it? He was a naturalized American. But he wasn't—he'd lost his citizenship when he was dishonorably discharged. He was a German again. Funny, he didn't feel any different; he was just as American as any other guy. So they didn't want him. Okay, he'd find someone who did.

He approached the offices of a German line. He didn't like it much, but a guy had to eat.

"Karl Zimmerman," he explained. "Torpedoman. Discharged from the U. S. Navy because my name's Zimmerman. I want a job."

The agent, a pink-faced man with short blond hair, looked him over, taking in his broad shoulders, blunt, sunburned features and angry blue eyes.

"Why were you discharged?"

Zimmerman caught an inspiration. "I told them they needed a Hitler over here."

"You an American citizen?"

"Was. But I was born in Strassbourg."

So!" said the man softly. "Well, there is a berth aboard the *Tannenberg*. Pay, thirty Reich marks a month and found. You're lucky. She is a deluxe cruise ship, running between New York and the West Indies."

"Gee, thanks, mister. When do I start?"

"Go aboard now. She came in this morning. And report yourself to the Chief Officer, Herr Motke."

"Okay."

"*Deutch Sprechen?*" shot the man suddenly.

"*Ja wohl*—well, I ain't had much practice in the Navy."

The man smiled grimly. "Better you practice now."

"Sure," said Karl and went out. He hurried to a subway, carrying an envelope with his signed articles, got out at 42nd Street and walked to the Hud-

son River. There she was, taking in fuel oil.

A big baby! Thirty-two thousand tons, two bright yellow funnels and the lines of a gigantic yacht.

"No visitors," said a uniformed man at the pier.

"Crew member," Karl said.

"So. All right, go aboard."

He climbed stairs, and walked through the empty echoing customs shed to where a gangway gave access to the ship. A quartermaster stared curiously as he smothered a salute to the quarter deck.

"Hey, pal!" he called. "Where's the mate?" Then, as the man stared uncomprehendingly *"Erste Offizier?"*

The man directed him, and he mounted to the officers' quarters below the bridge and tapped at a door.

"Komme!" said a deep voice.

He entered, snatched off his hat and presented the articles. The officer looked over the papers, and steady brown eyes took stock of him.

"Deutscher, huh?"

"Ja, Mein Herr."

"So. Go to the boatswain. He will show you where to bunk."

"Ja wohl."

"Heil Hitler." Karl, startled, looked back from the door to see the mate standing, right hand rigidly saluting.

"Yeah. *Heil Hitler,"* he mumbled bashfully and got out of there.

"Imagine him doing that stuff in America. Well, it's a German ship. I guess they've got a right."

HE REPORTED to a beefy middle-aged boatswain, who questioned him briefly, assigned him to a berth, and gave him a chit to the men's canteen, where he drew a dress uniform and cotton slacks and jumper.

He went to quarters and looked over his mess mates. Not bad guys, he decided—young fresh-faced kids, clean as whistles and browned with sun bathing.

They saluted solemnly, *"Heil Hitler"* when he entered, but by now he'd got the swing of it, and managed to return the gesture with appropriate smartness.

They asked questions, suspicious of his halting German, but he told them of his service in the U. S. Navy, and was surprised and quite pleased to find himself something of a hero.

"You'll be a storm trooper, *Ja?"* said a youngster shyly.

"Storm Trooper? Oh, sure." Karl decided to play cagey. What the hell were storm troopers doing on a ship?

"Gut," said the kid. "I too am storm trooper. These—" pointing to the rest of the mess—"are only Hitler Youths and S. A. men."

"So. How many in the crew?"

"Seven hundred and sixty."

That many? Like a battle wagon, he thought.

"All are divided into storm troopers, S. A. men and Hitler Youth." explained his friend, who turned out to be Kurt Hennig.

"You will attend the lecture by the *Feuhrer,* yes?"

"Who's that?" asked Karl, masking his astonishment.

"Herr Drang. Senior second officer. He is a fine brave man, officer in the Reich Navy, champion boxer, champion pistol shooter, the strongest man in the ship."

There was a recreation deck for the crew. At nine o'clock about two hundred and fifty sailors reported there, standing to attention before a table where, beneath a red, black and white Swatiska flag, sat a burly brown faced man in officer's uniform. Beside him a little narrow shouldered, sharp featured civilian eyed the men. The *Feuhrer* stood up, his mighty shoulders dwarfing the rest of them.

Karl examined a short, pugnacious nose, tiny black eyes below heavy brows, and a jutting chin that strangely contradicted a small, effeminate, thin lipped mouth.

He harangued them in a strident, high-pitched voice.

"As members of the greatest nation on earth," he shouted, "you must show example to the Americans and other peoples with whom you come in contact. The Leader looks upon you to represent him in all that you do. You work as storm troopers wherever you are. Neglect nothing that might be of use to the

Feuhrer. If you see anything make a note of it, and hand it in as you come aboard. If you hear conversations ashore, remember and repeat them to me. If your fellow sailors use subversive talk, report them. You are troopers of the Reich. Don't forget it. Don't forget either that here in America you are in a minority; you must behave quietly and avoid trouble. What happens now is nothing. Your time will come. We on this ship are the vanguard of a great power. We are preparing the world for the leader himself, and we shall be rewarded. *Heil Hitler.*"

Two hundred fifty right arms jutted like spars as the guttural salute rang out. Karl shouted with the rest. That was the stuff. Damn them, they'd throw him out of a smutty little light cruiser, and here on a fine passenger ship he was already a big guy.

HE WAS leaving the recreation deck, when Hennig stopped him.

"The *Feuhrer* will see you."

"What—oh, sure." Karl straightened his jumper and walked to the desk, where Drang sat surrounded by the purser and some hard looking seamen. The civilian watched quietly. Karl came to attention and saluted. "*Heil Hitler.*"

"*Heil Hitler.*" replied Drang. "You are a new man?"

"Yes, sir."

"So. Storm Trooper Hennig said you would like to join us."

"Yes, sir!" Karl wished some of his old mess mates could see him now.

"Well, your conduct will be watched. And if your zeal merits it, you may be admitted to our ranks."

"Yes, sir."

"That's all. *Heil Hitler.*"

"*Heil Hitler.*" Kurt wheeled and marched out.

Hennig met him in quarters.

"How did it go?" he wanted to know.

Kurt squared his shoulders. "Oh, I told him what my experience was. He said a guy like me would be mighty useful."

"*Schoen*. You will soon be a full trooper."

"Oh, sure." Kurt looked about the clean, comfortable quarters. On the bulkhead were pictures of Hitler, flanked by round-faced blond girls, and in one frame was an old lady who might easily have been his own mother. He guessed she would have been proud of him now. If he worked his way up in the storm troopers he might easily be a quarter-master, or even a boatswain before many voyages.

Next day he was turned out early and detailed to transfer passengers' trunks to the baggage room.

The *Tannenberg* sailed at noon, and he caught a little leisure to look over the rail and see the towers of lower Manhattan disolving into a purple mist astern, the Statue of Liberty posing grandly to starboard.

That afternoon he was on the sun deck, polishing brasses. A keen breeze blew from the southwest, and the great ship rolled gently to a slight swell. He became conscious of being watched. He turned around. Drang stood behind him.

"*Heil Hitler,*" he mumbled, confused, and turned back to his work.

"*Achtung!*" snapped the second officer.

He stood to attention.

"So. You didn't like discipline in the Navy?"

"It wasn't that, sir," he said. "I didn't like being rode all the time. Some of them bob-tailed ensigns thought I was a dog or something."

"So. You hate them?"

"Sure I hate them."

"You'd like to get back at them?"

"Sure—I guess."

"So. Get on with your work."

"Yes, sir."

What did he mean? Karl wondered uneasily. He didn't want to get back at nobody. He was out of the Navy. He had a job. What the hell—

Someone called him.

"Report on E deck."

"Okay." He handed over his cleaning materials and went below.

A group of sailors lounged on a concrete deck, just above the water line. On each side of them double steel doors admitted occasional dashes of cool spray. The men sprang to attention as Drang appeared.

"You men, this is your emergency sta-

tion. Emergency signal is five blasts of the ship's siren. Dismissed. You wait, Zimmerman."

The men trooped off, and Karl stood stiffly watching the thin-lipped, bullet-headed man. His mighty chest strained the buttons of his white tunic, and small eyes studied Kurt speculatively.

"You torpedoman, yes?"

"Yes, sir."

"What were your duties?"

"Cleaning tubes, propelling machinery, fittin' war heads." Karl exaggerated a little; he didn't want Drang to think he didn't know his stuff.

"You understand the handling and stowing of explosives?"

"Yes, sir."

"So. You'll be on watch from 8 A. M. to 4 P. M. except for special duty."

"Yes, sir."

"Dismissed."

He returned to the boat deck.

NEXT morning the weather was warmer. There was a keenness in the air that exhilarated him. This was a good berth, he congratulated himself—food was good, work was light.

That night there was another lecture by Drang, and the small civilian appeared in a khaki uniform with white collar, black tie and a peaked cap. A broad arm-band with a Swastika decorated one arm. This time he spoke too.

"Those who show themselves fit," the little man said, "need never consider themselves limited to the future of sailors. They will be used where they can be of most use to the Reich, be it at sea or at shore, in America or in Germany. There is no limit to the honor they may achieve. So never lose sight of your birthright. There are Germans everywhere awaiting the signal to rise up and demonstrate the power of the Reich."

Karl was a little thoughtful after that. Looked as if someone was looking for trouble. But it couldn't happen on a passenger ship.

In the gangway outside his quarters was a notice board.

"Drill tonight," said Hennig, "at midnight."

Drill at midnight! What the hell was going on in the *Tannenberg*?

At eleven forty-five he followed Hennig, barefoot and dressed in trousers only, to the upper deck, where an officer awaited them. Orders were given in a low voice and a squad of fifty marched and performed setting up exercises. At one o'clock they were dismissed.

Next day the ship was in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

Karl watched passengers disembarking and stood on gangway duty all that morning, repelling the advances of bumboatmen. He was surprised to receive orders to permit no crew members ashore.

Karl became popular with his mess mates as his fluency with the language returned to him. The passengers were okay too, only some of them asked the damndest questions. One old lady wanted to know what he was doing on a German ship.

"You're American, aren't you?" she asked.

"Well, I'm of German descent."

"What will you do if war breaks out?"

"There won't be any war," he laughed.

"What? With Hitler snatching Czecho Slovakia and all the rest, trying to get Poland, and now this new Russian pact. If you don't want to be on the wrong side you'd better get another ship, son." He was going below when Dran stopped him.

"You were talking to a passenger," he stated.

"Why—yes. She spoke to me first."

The German's cold eyes bored into him. "Passengers may ask questions about our drilling on the boat deck at nights—or other things they don't understand. You will explain these things as ordinary ship routine."

"Yes, sir."

"But don't talk to passengers unless to answer questions."

"Yes, sir."

AS THE great ship sailed south he settled quickly to the routine. There were lectures and drills thrice a week after midnight. Once they were taken to a rifle range in the uttermost depths of the

ship. They used .22 caliber rifles at twenty-five yards, and pistols at fifteen and twenty. Careful note was made of their score.

There was liberty at Barbados. That is, members of the crew were allowed ashore in squads and marched about Trafalgar Square and the government offices under junior officers. Karl noticed that no sailors were permitted to go off alone and that every exit from the ship was carefully guarded.

"Pretty strict, ain't they?" he said to Hennig.

The young man pursed his lips and nodded towards a heavily built, dark featured man who stood near by.

"What do you mean?"

"Better to ask no questions," muttered Hennig.

"Why? Who's that guy?"

"Party commissar. If he hears you he'll report you to Drang."

During the next few days Karl felt some uneasiness. He found that the men were reticent, that every man seemed suspicious of his neighbor.

"Damned lot of stool pigeons," he muttered scornfully, but decided to watch his step.

Grenada was the next stop. There was no shore leave and he was dropping pennies overside for diving boys when he saw a tanker draw alongside. Funny, the *Tannenberg* had taken on fuel in New York. Then he noticed that oil was being transferred to the tanker. Strange!

What kind of a ship was this? Puzzled conversation. Crew divided into parties —civilians swanking about the lower decks in military uniforms. He had noticed by this time that more than half the crew were off duty all day, and that every officer seemed duplicated. What did it mean?

It was four days before Curacao loomed out of the purple horizon. The sea was like glass and the pretty Dutch port was clean and cool in the brilliant sunshine. Passengers hurried ashore to go sightseeing. Towards noon two barges came alongside.

"Go below and check cargo into those lighters," ordered a junior officer.

He went to a steel door in the side of the ship. A plank was run down to the lighter rocking in the gentle swell beneath him. Seamen started passing cargo.

Karl took the tally and watched small, but heavy boxes slide down the greased plank. Men caught them carefully and stowed them in the lighter. There seemed to be no consignment marks on them, just numbers.

"Where's all that stuff goin'?" he wondered aloud.

One of the men grinned, but said nothing.

He examined the cases as they passed him. They were made of stout timbers and rope handles were at each end. He saw a thick rope mat at the bottom of the plank.

"Ammunition, by God!"

Different shaped cases began to appear. But these were boldly marked "provisions." He watched the men stack them carefully over the smaller cases.

The two lighters drew away astern of a powerful tug, and his eyes bugged out as a tanker came alongside and began pumping oil into the Tannenberg.

"Say, what the hell's goin' on?" He wheeled from the door and almost crashed into Drang.

"What do you mean?" asked the officer softly.

"Nothin'," he mumbled. "Must use a lot of oil in this ship."

"Yes, we do." said Drang sweetly.

Karl went to his quarters, unhappily conscious of the second officer's eyes. He was thoroughly frightened now. He had not seen a paper for weeks, but he knew damned well that something funny was going on. He wished himself off the *Tannenberg*. He'd heard tales of German bases along the South American coast. Perhaps the *Tannenberg* was carrying stores right now for submarines, submarines that might torpedo American ships. Hastily he threw off his jumper and dragged on his own clothes. He started for an after gangway. Once above, he would not come back. A burly quartermaster stopped him. A little way down the deck stood the black browed commisar.

"No shore leave," grunted the quartermaster.

"I gotta errand to do."

"*Ja?* Wait."

The commissar strolled nearer.

"Okay, I'm goin' below," said Karl suddenly.

He started for the cargo door, might manage to catch one of the diving boys' boats. He leaned out to hail one when he was gripped by two sailors.

"Come along!"

"Hey! What's goin' on?"

Suddenly a mighty fist crashed into his mouth.

He struggled to get free, tears of rage in his eyes.

"You dirty—"

Someone slapped him hard, and a heavy boot thudded into his thigh.

He was surrounded by sullen, brutal faces and hard fists crashed into his face. Sick with fear and pain, he struggled weakly, but the two men held him firmly and frog-marched him along an alley and into a small gray cell that was lighted with a single electric bulb. They threw him against the wall, went out and slammed the door.

WEEPING with pain and anger, he crouched on a hinged shelf. His eyes were closing and blood trickled from his broken mouth. He weaved sickly to the grated door.

"Hey! Let me out!"

There was no answer. He shouted until he was hoarse and slammed his fists against the door until they were bleeding. He was slumped on the shelf when the door opened and a wooden-faced seaman put a mug of coffee and a plate with a few ship's biscuits on the deck.

"Say, you can't do this to me," he shouted. "I want to see the captain."

The man grinned silently and went out.

"I tell you I—" His voice failed with complete dismay. What were they going to do? He managed to swallow some coffee, but the hard biscuits were too much for his sore mouth. He tried to sleep, but the harsh brilliance of the light over his head seared through his eyelids. His head ached and he could hear nothing but the mysterious mechanical sounds of a ship in port. It seemed he had been in the cell for hours. There was no means of telling day from night. He must have slept, for there was another mug of coffee, cold, and the same few biscuits.

He was afraid. Good God! These things just didn't happen on modern ships. He sat on the wooden shelf, weary with suspense.

Some time later he heard the approach of booted feet. The door opened and Hennig, with two storm troopers, stood outside.

They marched him along the alley, through a guarded companion and into a cabin unfurnished but for a table, two chairs in which sat Drang and the man in Nazi uniform, and a portrait of Hitler beneath the swastika flag.

He faced them, licking blood from his lip. Drang glared with eyes that were cold as marbles, his mouth a tiny slit in his square face. The Nazi stared as though to search his confused brain, drumming with long fingers on the table.

"What have you to say?" barked Drang suddenly.

"Whaddya mean?" stuttered Karl. "I tried to get ashore. Do I get beat up like a crook getting the third degree for that?"

"Silence! You are accused of desertion."

Karl was almost speechless. "This ain't the Navy. I'm a free man. Can't a sailor go ashore?"

"Oh!" Drang's voice grew soft and musical. "A free man?"

Drang leaned forward, small teeth showing between his taut lips.

"After a dishonorable discharge from the American Navy? After saluting the *Feuhrer?*" He jumped to his feet and the narrow room reverberated to his roar. "*Schwein!* You're a German in a German ship. You're a damned insubordinate deserter. You can be shot! Do you know that?"

Karl shambled, dazed, along the overheated alleyways to the cell where he slumped on the wooden bed, too shocked to move. After some hours he heard a faint bellow of the siren, then the beat of engines. It seemed hours before he was marched to the crew's shower.

"Clean yourself," snarled a guard, "and report to the scullery man."

Wearily he examined his battered features. He needed a shave and went to his quarters for a razor. Hennig was there with three men.

"Get out of here," he roared. "You *schwein*. Get below where you belong."

Licking his lips, Karl moved towards him, but the others jumped from their bunks and he went out.

He found the scullery and squatted before a bag of potatoes with two furtive youngsters, who eyed him silently. He peeled potatoes until his fingers were numb, cleared away the rinds and empty sacks, and followed the boys to the galley for his dinner. He ate it ravenously. A guard came before he had finished and marched him back to the cell. Some of his belongings were there, clothes, shoes and jumper, but no razor; nothing that could be used as a weapon. Miserably he tried to sleep.

IT WAS still night when he was aroused and led back to the scullery. There he toiled cleaning pots and pans, filthy with grease, his head aching with the close atmosphere.

The ship was rolling easily and he longed to go on deck for some fresh air. He got some coffee and that helped a little. He was cleaning up the brick deck of the scullery when the ship heeled a little and stayed over.

"What the hell?" He leaned to the roll. "Changing course." Someone hurried past the doorway.

"We are going back to Curacao," a seaman shouted.

"Why?"

"Emergency. We go back to disembark the passengers."

Karl's hair crisped. What could be the reason for dumping passengers. War? He eyed the boys across the table. Their faces were apprehensive.

He started out of the scullery. One of the boys shouted and a guard stepped forward.

"Okay, okay!" he said. "I'm goin' back to the cell."

They marched him along the alleyway. He tried to question them, but they jerked him until his head snapped. He sat in the cell, biting his nails, frantically trying to think. If he could only get ashore.

No one came near that day, and some hours later he heard a change in the beat of engines and the ship stopped. He could hear winches and guessed that baggage was being put over the side.

"Damn you, let me out!" he yelled kicking against the iron door.

But no one came and, exhausted, he sank on the bench.

In a very few hours the engines began again and then there was a slow roll as the ship got under way. By the beat of screws and the crash of water against her sides she was under forced draught. What were they going to do?

He was awakened by the opening of his door; the engines had stopped and the ship rolled gently. He heard the clatter of an anchor. This was Curacao, then, where they were putting passengers ashore. He recognized two tough-faced men outside as storm troopers he had seen in the E deck after companion.

They marched him there. The two doors stood open to the sea, and to starboard, above five miles off, he made out a low, green-gray coastline faint in the dusk. Four men lifted a heavy trap in the deck and descended. Drang appeared.

"Well, my free man," he grinned. "We've got work for you now. Get down there."

He descended and found himself in a well lighted hold. All available space was filled with stacked cases. The men stood by. A bespectacled officer spoke rapidly to them. Karl listened and his skin crept as he eyed the cases. There was enough explosive to blow the ship to bits.

"Careful with these," the officer cautioned. "They are fulminate of mercury detonators and fuses."

Fulminate of mercury—dangerous as rattlesnakes! Once he had seen a shipmate lose a hand just because he squeezed one in his fingers. They began passing them and Karl handed them cautiously through the hatch overhead to a waiting seaman. They must have passed several hundred cases before the

officer called a halt. They climbed to the deck above and sat, the cool wind fanning their sweating faces.

"Where are we?" Karl asked.

"Venezuela," replied one of the men.

He glanced through the steel door. There were two lighters alongside filled with sailors, who carefully arranged the cases of detonators. Lights signaled ashore and a double searchlight from the *Tannenberg's* bridge played on the clouds overhead in reply. Then he made out a low craft in the dusk. It came closer and he recognized the lines of a submarine.

He stifled a horrified gasp. A submarine base, that's what it was! German, eh? He'd show them. He peered stealthily about him. He couldn't swim the five miles to shore. There was no chance of getting past the lights that shone down on the lighters and that damned submarine, nuzzling the *Tannenberg's* bilge like a reptile. An armed sentry stood by and seamen were grouped all about the deck. Hopeless!

At a word from the officer they went below. Karl followed, teeth grinding impotently.

MOST of the detonators had been transhipped and larger cases were revealed. He hoisted boxes of what he knew was rifle ammunition until his back throbbed with pain. There were long crates amidships and bulky pieces of machinery in heavy wooden frames, hooded with canvas.

"Get topside and bring the hoist over the hatch."

He climbed to the deck above and slid an electric traveling hoist along overhead rails. Lowering the hook, he watched the sailors make it fast to a long wooden case—torpedo, by the look of it. No wonder they were so anxious to get a torpedoman! He hoisted the projectile, shoved it along the rail and lowered it near the sea door. A derrick swung from the cargo deck far above and he caught its hook as it dangled opposite him. Making fast, he saw the torpedo swing off into the darkness and sink gently into the lighter. Ten of them were lowered and stowed. Then the hooded shapes came up. Mines, he guessed from the lumps beneath the canvas. Peering through the sea door, he made out the submarine a little ahead taking in oil. One lighter rode close to it; the other, below the sea doors and half laden with explosives, waited to take the mines.

"Careful!" warned someone. "Drop one of those things and we'll be blown to hell!"

Slowly the mine in its crate slid along the rail. Karl arranged a sling around it and drew in the hook from the derrick overhead. He signaled; a man in the lighter repeated it. The mine swung clear and lowered into the lighter. Another and another were passed until six were transhipped.

He heard a chuckle and Drang, hands on hips, watched him sardonically.

Karl looked at the grinning jaw. Suddenly he knew a tremendous calm.

"Okay," he said. "So I lost my citizenship. That makes me a German again, don't it? So I'm working for my own country. That right?"

"That's right," Drang said, watching him.

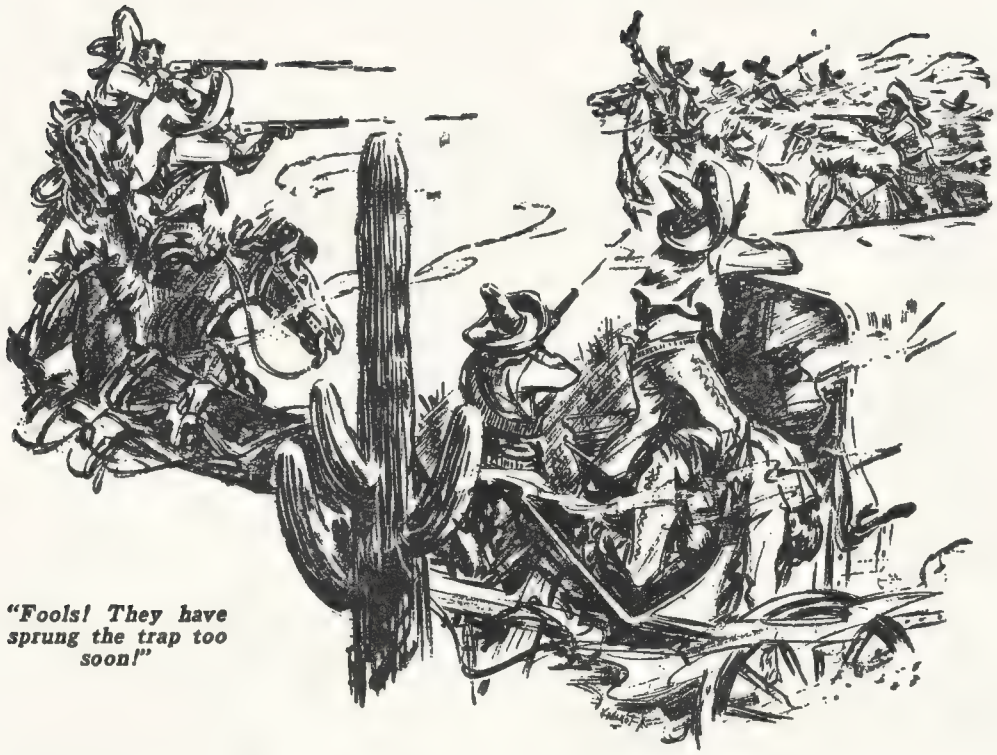
"Okay, I'll work for my country." said Karl clearly.

A mine slid along the traveler and he lowered it carefully to the deck, stopped and fixed a sling about it. Then he stepped to the door and fished in the hook from the boom overhead. In the bottom of the lighter seamen looked upwards. Under the lights he saw stacks of ammunition and detonators packed everywhere.

With his left hand Karl unhitched the sling, leaving the hook in one loop. The other loop he hitched over a protuberance in the wooden frame. He stood back, breathing easily.

"Hoist away!" he called.

A lighterman signaled and the hook slowly lifted the load. It swung clear of the door. There was a jerk and the mine slid out of its sling. Karl saw the horrified face of Drang while the great bulk dropped towards the lighter. He seemed to hear screams. Then there was a mighty shock, an explosion that tore the night apart, and the world dissolved in a sea of searing, orange flame.



"Fools! They have sprung the trap too soon!"

THE ANGER OF THE DOVE

By A. GROVE DAY

IF YOU ask me, sir, why I became a revolutionary, I will say that it was because of land and liberty. Yet that was not the only reason. I became a revolutionary because before that I was a bandit. And I became a bandit because of my gringo.

My gringo was a good gringo. He was called Juan Scott, a young man of the large border town of Pass of the North, where much Mexican is spoken. This Scott, although young, had gone to the schools and had learned about the working of mines. At this time, Scott had a placer claim in the Hills of the Cat, in my own country, and I and my friend The Cask were helping the young man to wash out the gold, although there was not much gold yet.

One night Scott said to me, "I think, Primitivo, that soon we may uncover the rich float above. In two days, or maybe three, we will come out of this barren *borrasca* and touch the shining pockets of bonanza. Then the riffles will be choked with nuggets, and we can buy ourselves some decent clothes and some machinery, and we will all be rich."

"If that comes to us, my boss," I said, "I will purchase a good gringo six-shot pistol and much gold braid for my sombrero."

"And I will get myself some tripe and a gallon or two of the best sotol to sluice my windpipe," said The Cask, shutting his eyes and rubbing his great belly. This Cask was a walking wineskin, sir. He was almost seven feet high and was seven-eights Tarahumare Indian; and he could drink at one time enough for five of us proper people.

We slept and each man had his own dream. The awakening was harsh, for in the time of the false dawn, a grand explosion sounded above the ravine toward the hillside spring, and we leaped up with our rifles in our hands.

When we reached the place of the

spring, no person was to be seen, but a thin cloud of dust still rose in the air. Juan Scott cursed very quietly in his own tongue. Even in the dim light, he saw at once, as we all did, what great harm the dynamite had done.

Very cunningly the sticks had been laid. The little tank we had built to get the water for our pipe-line was cracked and nearly empty; bent pipes were lying among broken rocks. The course of the spring-water had been changed by the blast so that now, instead of running down our side of the hill to the tank, the waters trickled somewhat to the left and down on the far side, to lose themselves among the gravel.

"Our water is gone," said The Cask, very foolishly. "Now we will never get into the bonanza, being without the water, and I will never be rich and have my fill of sotol."

The wits of Scott were shaken, I think, for he stared at the broken tank and kicked a piece of ruined pipe.

"Who could have done this behind-the-back thing, Primitivo?" he asked me.

"I know not who fired the fuse," I answered, "but you are as sure as I am, my boss, who gave the order to have it done. Don Salustio Vargas is like a king in all this country. An evil king. He will not suffer anyone to become rich in the world but himself."

"Sew up thy mouth, Primitivo Valiente," says Scott rudely. "I have not seen this Don Salustio, but he must be a gentleman, too proud to have a finger in such a foul pot as this."

"You talk against your own belief, my boss. This Don Salustio wears golden clothes, and in this world the drivel of a rich man is greeted as wisdom. Don Salustio has come to own most of this part of the republic, and he would look upon us as poachers. Besides, he has mines of his own, where the poor peons sweat out their lives under the lash of an overseer."

"If he is so rich, all the less reason why he should grudge us the few pinches of metal we have found." But now my gringo spoke in a less certain tone, for he knew I had the right of it. "This gold claim is my own," he went on. "I have a paper giving me the right to mine here, and I have paid all the proper bribes to the proper persons. No man can justly drive me from my labor."

"Don Salustio can do it unjustly. The rich man's mouth is never filled."

"Well," muttered my Scott, "it may be that this gentleman, Don Salustio, can help me to get my rights. I will go to speak with him at his hacienda."

"Do not go," I said, for I was fond of this gringo. "One does not tickle the lion's nostrils with a straw."

"I will go. I shall ask only justice. What is there to fear? Don Salustio must be a gentleman. If you fear, you need not go with me, Primitivo Valiente."

This made me somewhat angry. "I do not fear. But this affair of the dynamite, that is merely a warning. If we are not frightened away like crows from the corn, there will be more and worse to come to us, my boss." You, sir, will see that I was right to say this.

AFTER we had eaten our tortillas, The Cask was left on guard at the camp with plenty of bullets. But Scott said that he and I would leave our rifles behind when we rode to the hacienda.

"I am a man of peace, as you know," said Scott. "We shall give the gentleman no cause to distrust our acts."

The Ranch of the Cat, as was called the hacienda of Don Salustio Vargas, was three leagues from our camp. We rode out of the hills and when we were still half a league from the village and the great ranch-house, we saw a muleteer standing by his laden burro in the shade of a dusty fresno tree. As we came, this man put his hand before our horses' noses and cried in a strong voice: "Hold!"

We drew up, for there was something in the voice of this muleteer that held one. We stared at the man before us, and he stared at us boldly, with his Texas hat pushed on the back of his round head.

This *arriero* was very much of a man, with a chest as great as a barrel-cactus in August; but he was not fat, and he moved swiftly, like a mountain lion. He had a good mustache of a roan color, and his curly roan hair was stuck with

sweat to his forehead. He was smiling very widely at us, but his eyes did not smile. His eyes were the color of a topaz.

"Go with God," I said. "We have business, friend."

The man's eyes looked through me, but all he said was, "I should like a wisp of tobacco, friends."

Scott tossed him a little sack with papers fixed to it—good Yankee tobacco, the lucky kind with the picture of a toro on the tag. All of us rolled cigarettes, and the muleteer smoked his with the lighted end cupped inside his hand, as does a *vaquero* or any man who spends much of his life riding among the winds.

"I am grateful," says he. "That tobacco is of a good taste. You are a Yankee, sir?"

"As you see, my friend," says my gringo. "I am called Juan Scott."

"I," says the *arriero,* "was named Doroteo Arango by my sainted mother. It is a good name for a muleteer. . . . They say that in your Yankee country, friend, there is liberty for all."

"There is a chance for all to be free." Scott shook his bridle-hand with some impatience, but he did not push past the muleteer. "It depends on what you think of when you say liberty."

"For me," says the stranger, "Liberty is what the great hero of our Indian race, Benito Juarez, called it. Liberty, said Juarez, is the respect for the rights of others. Juarez was the son of a peon, as I am, and he knew this. . . . Do you find that here in my country, sir, there is much liberty?"

"I do not," says Scott. "I am now on an errand which has to do with another's lack of respect for my right to labor and live."

"May you have luck! But I see you are going to the village owned by Don Salustio Vargas. Do not expect to find liberty there, friend. You must look for it elsewhere."

With that the muleteer stood aside and waved us by, as if he were warden of all the highways of the world, and we rode once more on our way. Once I looked back, and the *arriero* was still standing in the road, watching us.

"That muleteer," I said, "does not look like a muleteer, and he does not talk like a muleteer."

WE passed through the village, which was a very poor place, and so came to the high iron gate of the hacienda of the family Vargas. I do not know, sir, whether you have ever seen an hacienda such as those that were to be found in my country in the latter days of Don Porfirio. They were encircled with miles of high stone walls, like a fort or castle, and the men who owned them ruled a region larger than some kingdoms I have heard of. They were places of power, and too often that power was used for great evil against the people of my country.

The gate-keeper had two pistols. When he saw that we had no guns, he said we could enter and speak to the administrator, Don Claro.

We entered. Inside the gate, between the blacksmith shop and the store for the peons, we saw a troop of *rurales,* the mounted police of my country, sitting in the sun and drinking pulque. There were forty of these hardy fellows, and their captain was a skinny man with a large wart on his nose. The stables were filled with the horses of this troop. In those days it was possible for a rich man and a friend of Don Porfirio to have a company of *rurales,* or even government soldiers, sent to serve the fighting needs of the rich man. It was clear that Don Salustio had a private army barracked behind his walls.

Beyond a grove of fine green orange trees we found the courtyard of the great house, with marble pillars in front. Here we left our horses, and were privileged to speak on the steps with Don Claro, the administrator, a pasty-faced man who carried a silver whip. Don Claro said that Don Salustio was busy and could not speak with us. Tomorrow, perhaps . . .

We heard wild cries of pain coming from the side of the courtyard. My Scott rushed around to the place whence these came, and I followed, wishing that we had not left our rifles in the camp.

The shouts came from a shirtless peon who was bound to a stake, taking on his

back the lashes of two overseers. Juan Scott ran up to them.

"Stop!" he told them, in his gringo manner. "What has this man done?" My gringo was a young man of much heart.

Then he saw the lady, and took off his sombrero. The lady was standing there in a long riding-dress of blue velvet, and she wore a small hat with a soft blue feather. She carried a little whip with a gold handle.

"This does not amuse you, sir?" she asked in a purring voice.

This young lady had a soft white skin and sharp small teeth. The pupils of her eyes were very pale, so that her eyes seemed all white. If you think that a white tigress is handsome, then she was very handsome.

Juan Scott smiled at her, and when he smiled no one could be very angry with him. Did I say that my gringo was good-looking, for a gringo? He had dark eyes and a bridge to his nose, and a small mustache. . . . The peon yelled again as the lash fell, twice more, striping his poor back.

The lady showed her white teeth. "You ask, sir, what this creature has done. He is one of my servants. This morning he was clumsy, and after that, when I reproved him, spoke rudely. Now he is paying for that."

"But—do you keep slaves here?" asked Scott, but not harshly, for I could see that already he was much attracted by this strange young lady. "Is a man to be killed for clumsiness?"

"You must be a foreigner, sir."

"I am Juan Scott, of El Paso." He bowed, with his eyes still on her white face.

"And I am Clotilde Vargas de Medardo. If you wish, I shall let off the brute, although he was to have had eleven lashes more." She waved a hand, and one of the overseers untied the peon, who fell in the dust. "Rub salt well into the cuts," she ordered, "so that they will heal quickly. Then the man can work in the mine, for I will not have him again in my house."

She turned to Scott, who all this while had kept his gaze on her. "And you, Juan Scott of El Paso, do you come to visit the Ranch of the Cat to instruct yourself upon our ways of training servants?"

"I came," he said, "to speak with your father, Don Salustio, on a matter of some moment to me. But he will not see me."

"If you wish to see Don Salustio, I will have it arranged." She smiled, as if at some secret of her own.

She swept before us to the steps, where Don Claro was smoking and biting his nails. To him the lady gave brief orders, glancing now and again at Scott. Then a peon brought up a creamy palomino horse with a side-saddle.

Juan Scott helped her to mount. She thanked him with a flashing smile. "Until the next meeting, Juan Scott!" Then she was off at a canter, through the orange trees, and we passed into the shade of the great house.

THE master of the hacienda sat in a room of books before dark-curtained windows, and behind him stood two black men with hands on their pistol-butts. Don Salustio Vargas was not one of your pale weak *gachupines*, even though he was as haughty as any Spaniard that ever cursed a peon. This Don Salustio had the robust look of a man who was much in the saddle, and there was a mere powder of gray in his short beard. He did not look up from some writing as we thumped across the waxed floor in our heavy boots.

"My daughter has interceded for you, it seems," he said carelessly. "Speak."

But Juan Scott said nothing, waiting for the *hacendado* to raise his heavy-lidded eyes. There was the strain of halted minutes in the air, as when a man has lighted a split fuse and is not sure whether it will touch off the stick. Don Salustio played with his pen, and at last looked up. He wasted no part of a glance on me, but looked long at my Scott.

Then the younger man said: "I need no intercession from anyone, even your very chaming daughter, Don Salustio. I do not come begging favors. I come to ask for the justice that any man has the right to expect of others. I ask that

your men do not again try to halt my work by skulking tricks."

Don Salustio blinked. "You threaten, sir?"

"You admit guilt, sir?"

"I admit nothing. I deny nothing. A Vargas does neither. You have perhaps said all you wish to say?"

"I have not," says Juan Scott. "I wish to say that if the affair at dawn this morning was an effort to frighten me away, it has failed. I shall return to my little mine, and even though it means much hard effort, by tomorrow my men will have the work going ahead once more. I have thought of ways to repair the damage you have tried to do. Your attempt to halt me with force has been useless. I am a stranger; I am a man of peace, without a great estate, without the paid protection that a full purse can command. But I am a free man, and cowardly attacks cannot drive me from my own place and my work."

"Thou hast spoken, man of peace." Don Salustio was sardonic. "Now, sir, you will perhaps leave my house."

"I will." Juan Scott turned and marched to the door. Turning, he said: "I hope you will convey to your daughter my thanks for her courtesy to a stranger. It is, it seems, a fairly rare virtue hereabouts."

Don Salustio rose in his place. "You will never see her again, young stranger. As for myself, I am not so sure. Until the next meeting, Señor Scott!"

We found our horses and rode through the courtyard. The troop of *rurales* still drank pulque and played at monte. Behind us the porter locked the iron gates.

In the village we paused to purchase meal and meat. On the steps of the store I saw a crippled laborer, and at his feet a child played with a bright painted toy of wood.

The little boy looked happy as he played. It was a good change, after the gloom of the great house, to see a child playing.

"That is a fine toy you have, *chamaco*," I said, smiling. "Perhaps your father has bought it from the muleteer who passed here this morning?"

The cripple looked at me fearfully. "The muleteer, friend?"

"Yes, the muleteer whom we saw on the road."

"Friend, there has been no *arriero* pass through the village for more than a week."

"But—"

"Do not speak of a muleteer," said the cripple. His face was yellow with fright. "Do not speak of him. He was not here."

I said no more after that. A closed mouth, it is told, catches no flies.

LOADED with our meat and other food, we rode the three leagues to our camp. The Cask had seen nothing strange, and he swore he had not fallen asleep. We ate a cold meal, and then, foregoing the siesta, we all three went with our tools to the broken dam by the spring.

Juan Scott had not made an idle boast when he spoke to Don Salustio of mending the water-line. We set about the work under the baking sun, although at first it seemed a fool's task to try and carry on that labor. Yet my gringo was a young man of many expedients, and I began mending the cracked pipe with rags and wire, while The Cask, under the orders of Juan Scott, started to cut a deep ditch so that the water would once more flow down to the place where the shattered reservoir had been.

"It calls for real labor, my friends," said Juan Scott, when the shadows were beginning to grow long, "but it will be worth much to us. Tomorrow the dam can be built again, and the day after, it will have filled enough so that we can begin once more to wash out the dust that is to make us rich."

"Little by little," said The Cask sagely, "the hen fills her craw."

"Tonight," Juan Scott went on, "we shall share the duty of keeping a guard over our spring. I will take the earliest morning watch myself. If any cowardly rascal comes then, Primitivo—"

He looked at me, but I was staring beyond him, bottle-eyed. All the thickets of the hillside had sprouted rifle-barrels.

We put up our hands. There was nothing else to do, if we did not wish to be shot.

There must have been forty men in

the gang that had ambushed us. These men were swathed in colored serapes, and they all had brand-new sombreros of woven palm-leaf, pulled low over the eyes. All wore good leather shoes and leggings of the same make.

A dozen of them ran to us and jammed their carbines against our bodies. The man who was foremost in threatening Juan Scott was a skinny fellow with a large wart on his nose.

Others of the gang began pulling apart our pipe-line and smashing the lead pipe across boulders. Still others took our tools and ran down the hill toward our camp, where some more of the gang were heaping up our wooden flumes and boxes. All the while, two of the raiders did nothing but stand near us and chant, in dull tones: "Viva Villa! Viva Villa!"

The Cask moaned with anger as three gun-barrels were stuck deep into his spreading belly. The man with the wart growled threateningly at Juan Scott. "We bandits do not like foreigners who steal the wealth of our country! Go back to your own land, gringo!"

Juan Scott laughed grimly. Then, disregarding the carbines aimed at him, he walked over to a mounted man who sat a little apart, wearing a long dark cloak that muffled him to the eyes. He looked up at this man. The sunset colored his face with a red glow.

"We meet soon again, Don Salustio!" said Juan Scott. "And you come like a coward, with your paid army, to put an end to the hopes of three peaceful workers!"

From down below us, where our camp had been, came a black swirl of smoke. The gang was burning our tents and our clothes, as well as our tools and rifle-boxes. The mounted man said nothing.

The air was shaken with three explosions. The invaders had blown up our working-place with our own dynamite. At this Juan Scott trembled with fury.

"Goat of a Vargas!" he cried. "You shall pay for this thing!"

"Shall I shoot him, my chief?" asked the man with the wart, his finger on the trigger of his carbine.

"No," said the man in the cloak. "He boasts that he is a man of peace. We shall leave him in peace."

"Viva Villa! Viva Villa!" chanted the two raiders behind us.

I, Primitivo Valiente, was somewhat afraid at this time. We three were alone among them, and our rifles had been left below at the camp. But Juan Scott was beyond such fear. He waved his fist beneath the dim face of the horseman.

"Don Salustio Vargas, you shall pay twice over for the harm you have done!"

From below us came the last explosion to wreck our camp. The voice of the cloaked man came with a sneer. "The man of peace threatens! Terrible indeed is the anger of the dove!" He reached out his left hand, which carried a riding-whip with a gold handle. He slashed downward, and a purple stripe was cut across the face of Juan Scott.

Then the man rode off, sitting straight in his saddle. After that, all the enemy, with their guns still pointing at us, retreated down the ravine quickly. We three were alone. Night was beginning to drop on the Hills of the Cat.

The Cask rubbed the places where the weapons had bruised him. "Those men wanted us to think they were bandits, but they were not bandits. I wish I had a good drink."

WE WENT down to the ruined camp. Two fires were still smouldering. They had left us nothing but our empty rifles, laid carefully on a rock. All our ammunition, and Juan Scott's leather cartridge-belt, had been taken. Our horses still grazed in their hobbles on the flat down by the stream. These things were all we had left in the world.

Juan Scott touched his hurt face.

"What name did they cry, those two who stood at a distance?" he asked.

"Villa," said The Cask. "It is the name of a bandit who is well known in Durango. Why should he be here in Chihuahua? Those men were *rurales*."

"Pancho Villa was born in Durango. but no man knows where he will next be seen," I said. "Pancho Villa is everywhere and nowhere."

From a clump of oaks on the far hillside came a friendly hail, and a man and a laden burro began to ford the stream. As they came toward us, I saw

that it was the muleteer, Arango, that we had spoken with in the morning.

"What serpent has stung you, friends?" shouted the muleteer, as he picked his way among the ashes of the fires and saw our downcast faces.

"It is the serpent of injustice," said Juan Scott. "They have left us nothing, except our rifles and horses."

"Well," says the *arriero* cheerily, with his hat tilted back on his curly forelock, "many a man in this country has begun his work in the world with nothing more than a horse and a gun. Now, it happens that in my pack I have some blankets and food, to which you, my friends, are welcome. There is no good counsel in an empty paunch. We shall eat, and after that, friend Scott, it may be that we shall talk some more of liberty."

We passed that evening talking with the muleteer and thinking much of Don Salustio Vargas. When the time came to sleep, we wrapped ourselves in borrowed blankets. The *arriero* did not sleep in our camp. He took his blankets and walked across the ravine, and none of us knew where he slept.

An hour before dawn, the man named Arango woke us. "If you wish to see how Don Salustio Vargas gets his just deserts," he said, "you may follow me now. It will be a good jest."

"We will go," said Juan Scott. We saddled our horses.

The muleteer led us at a swift walking pace through some trails that wound toward the south. Not for nothing had he eyes of topaz. He seemed to know in the dark where each stone lay, where to cross at the best ford of a stream, where the short-cut could be found. Just before dawn, in a little grassy cup on a hillside, we paused. Here Arango found a big-boned black horse standing hobbled, and near-by under a fallen tree was hidden a saddle. Arango mounted this horse, leaving his burro and pack in its place, and then we went much faster.

We rode for about seven leagues on hill trails, passing no one; and before mid-morning came to the highroad at a point where this road curved around a cliff and started up a steep hill with thick brush on both sides. Half-way up this hill, Arango turned his black horse into the chaparral, and at once we were surrounded by fifty shouting, ragged men with rifles, who hailed our muleteer with delight.

"Viva Villa! Viva Villa!" yelled these ragged ones, and there was a good rough affection in their tones. They crowded about us. One man, a thick-set fellow who seemed to be a sort of lieutenant, came to the bridle of the black horse.

"We have waited, my chief," he said, "but they have not yet come."

"They will come soon. My orders still hold." The chief turned to us and grinned through his roan mustache. "My friends, be at home here. My mother called me Doroteo Arango, but that is not a good name for a bandit. So I call myself Pancho Villa now."

"Pancho Villa, I had guessed last night that it was you," said Juan Scott. "I thank you for your friendship."

"Who are these strangers, chief?" grumbled the lieutenant. "The tall one looks like a gringo. You know I kill gringos, chief. What does he here?"

"Patience, Tomas. These have no love for Don Salustio Vargas. They come to watch the jest. Now, return the men to their places, and make ready to spring our trap without a slip. I will shoot the man that fails us. Come, friends."

Pancho Villa gave the reins of his horse to one of his men, and we dismounted also, minding not the black looks of the bandit called Tomas. Then Villa strapped a belt with two pistols about his waist, and motioned us to walk before him through the underbrush, up the hillside.

Thus we were conducted up the hillside to a ledge whence we could see all the road below, except the place where the cliff overhung at the bottom of the ascent.

"Like a theater play, friends!" explained Villa. "Soon the curtain rises. I have learned that Don Salustio is sending today a load of gold bars from his mines, to lodge them in the banks of the capital city. Now you will see the robber robbed. The gold wrung from the sweat of peons will return through my hands to the peons again. It is a comedy we play."

WE HAD, in truth, not long to wait. Barely half an hour had passed as we crouched there, neither smoking nor speaking. Then, with wheels trailing plumes of dust, around the curve below came a diligence coach drawn by six horses. The driver stood on the box whipping the beasts up the grade, and a furlong behind rode twelve men with carbines—*rurales* on guard.

When the coach was well up the slope, half a dozen shots came from the brush, and the driver toppled from his box. Bandits appeared on either side of the road, firing at the escort; others ran to hold the kicking horses. The squadron of *rurales* pulled up, wheeled, and galloped out of sight on the backward way. It seemed a swift and full victory.

"Fools!" yelled Pancho Villa. "They have sprung the trap too soon!" He bounded down the hillside, shouting to his men to get back to their places. Most of the band were swarming about the coach, chocking the wheels with stones and cutting loose the horses. Tomas and two others had crawled inside.

Before their chief was half-way down to the diligence, Tomas stuck his head through the shattered door. "Lead!" he screeched. "There are bars here, but they are not gold—they are lead!"

"It is a trick," mumbled The Cask, lying beside me.

Clear it was to all three of us that the bandits had been tricked. For at that moment a troop of *rurales,* some forty of them, dashed into sight around the cliff below us.

Juan Scott leaped to his feet and fired his rifle three times in the air, to signal to Pancho Villa that he was taken unawares. Villa turned his head, and saw the danger. He screamed hoarsely at his men, who in a flash were again scattered in hiding, yet firing carefully at the riders that were almost upon them.

That was a good battle, sir. The *rurales* were tough men, but they made a stand in the open road, and the thick of them formed a target hard to miss. Moreover, the bandits were better shots. A *rurale* has all the bullets he wants, and therefore he is not careful, but a bandit must make each bullet count. So already many of the *rurales* and their horses were hit, while the men of Villa's band crept from one mesquite bush to another, and only a few of them were down, mostly those who had been caught in the road near the coach.

Anyone watching would have said that it was like a painting of a good battle. But we three had little time to look on. Juan Scott was no longer a man of peace. No, sir, my gringo boss was not a dove then. He had run down the hillside, reloading his rifle as he went, and from above the heads of the *rurales* was firing into the troop like a madman. The Cask and I were with him. I myself accounted for three of the *rurales,* sir.

I think it was our bullets that weakened the *rurales* most. They were dropping fast, and they could not guess that there were only three of us behind them. They must have believed they were flanked by a large force of bandits. A man with braid on his cap and a wart on his nose waved his arm in the air, and then the troop turned and raced away in full retreat.

When we got to the road, the last of the fleeing horsemen was vanishing around the bend. Pancho Villa, whom I had seen in half a dozen places during the fight, ran toward us; but my wild man of a Juan Scott did not wait for him. My gringo was off down the road, running as if he could, on his two legs, overtake the galloping enemy.

Pancho Villa clapped me on the shoulder. He was grinning through his sweat.

"That was a fight, eh, friend?" he asked. Beside the road, a dying *rurale* cried: "Mama, mama!" over and over. The bandit called Tomas finished him with a shot behind the ear.

I started off down the road to find my crazy boss. Around the bend, where we could not have seen it before, was an empty coach with two of its wheels in a ditch. It was, you understand, another coach. That was the device; the first coach was sent ahead as a decoy, and the second diligence could have turned and escaped at the first alarm, had its driver not become scared and ditched it.

At the order of Villa, his lieutenant Tomas climbed into the coach with two other men. I went beyond, for in a clump

of weeds stood Juan Scott, pointing his rifle at a crouching group of three people. I ran to help him. My gringo had come into some luck at last.

THE first of the three people he had found in hiding was a fat little man in a black frock, a priest certainly. Beside him stood Don Salustio Vargas, and clinging to the arm of her father was the lady Clotilde Vargas. She wore a dusty green velvet riding-dress, and a large hat without a plume. Her face was white.

Pancho Villa came swaggering over to us, with his hands on his pistols. "Juan Scott, I swear you would make a fine bandit! You gave us the warning, and now I find you have caught three birds I never hoped to see in my net!"

From the coach, Tomas called gleefully. "The gold bars are here, my chief! Hidden under the cushions!"

"Get them loaded on the horses, Tomas," said Villa. "Now, my Juan, what shall we do with your prisoners? I should like to shoot Don Salustio myself."

Juan Scott spoke slowly. "We have met again, Don Salustio. I could not have hoped for this so soon. Now I see why you told me I should never see your daughter again. You were taking her to the capital."

Don Salustio drew himself up, but said nothing. What could he say? The priest at his side was shivering.

"I can pay a ransom!" he quavered.

"Pah! We do not shoot priests—that is unlucky," said Villa. "But we may have other use for you. Come, my friend Juan; I must be many leagues from here before night, for the soldiers will be out. These are your prisoners. It is for you to say what shall be done with them."

Still Don Salustio said nothing. The lady bared her teeth in what might have been a smile at Juan Scott.

"Speak, my Yankee lion!" urged Villa. "The gold is almost all loaded. If you desire the girl, she is yours, of course. I suggest that you marry her. I always marry them; marriage is a good thing, and I dearly love a fine wedding. Of course, the hills where I live are no place for a wife. . . . Judge, friend, for time presses."

"Get this farce over with!" Don Salustio demanded in chill anger. Yet the wish to live was clear on his face.

"I will marry Juan Scott, my father." The girl did not take her gaze from the young man who still stood pondering his judgment.

The Cask whispered to me behind his hand. "I wonder if there might be wine in that coach? The bandits will have it all."

Then my gringo spoke his mind.

"Clotilde Vargas, there is no place for a woman where I go. Don Salustio Vargas, you may live, to remember. You are a proud man. But I also have a pride, a certain Yankee pride, that differs from yours. When you go back to your house of power and your hired fighters, remember that there was one man too proud to breathe again its oppressive air. I sought justice in that house; but there is more justice and more hope of freedom to be found among these men of Don Pancho's, men that your killers would shoot like beasts. Remember! . . . Pancho Villa, you have said I would make a good bandit. I will go with you now, if you will take me."

"Good!" Villa smiled very broadly. "That is a fine judgment. We shall let the *gachupin* goose go free, to lay some more golden eggs for us. Yet I would have liked a wedding!"

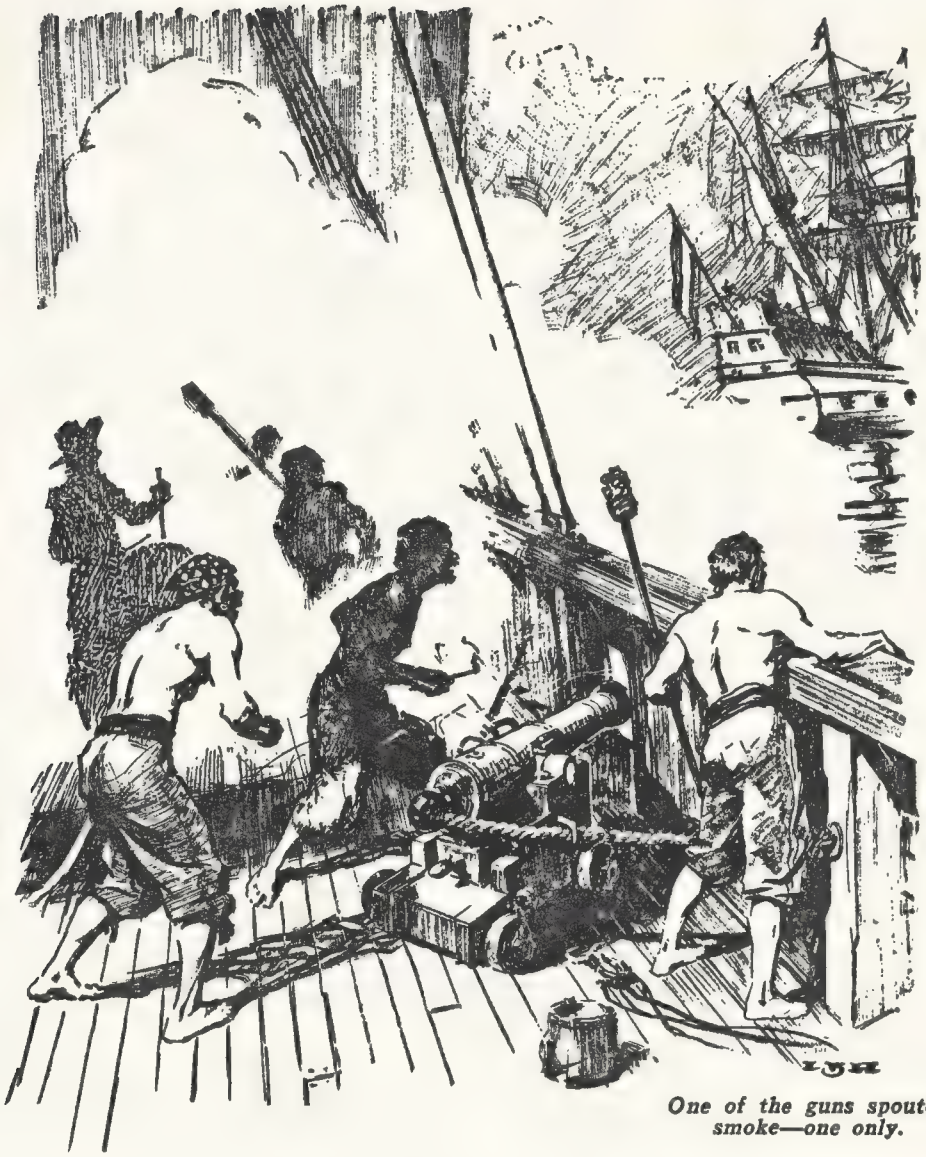
He turned to join his men, who were now mounted and ready to march. A bearded bandit with blood on his forehead held my horse and the horse of Juan Scott, waiting for us.

"Come and welcome, you and your two friends," declared Don Pancho. "Sometimes, at night, we can speak of liberty and freedom and such things."

"There is something more." Juan Scott stooped and picked up a gold-handled riding whip that lay on the ground. "I have a debt to pay, and I like to keep my promises."

Juan struck Don Salustio Vargas twice across the face. Then he took the girl in his arms and kissed her, not harshly. She returned that kiss. I, Primitivo Valiente, saw it, sir.

Then my gringo mounted his horse, and rode ahead with Pancho Villa, and we followed him, toward the wild hills.



One of the guns spouted smoke—one only.

THE DRUM OF PEGU

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

GODDARD BECKER moved restlessly about the room, touching a drum here and a drum there; his beloved collection seemed to tempt him at all points. He reached to a heavy metal piece, displaying Chinese characters, then shook his head and moved on.

"You know about the bronze drums of Chuko Liang? Wonderful story there, a heart-break of heroism—well, well, I'm not Chinese minded at the moment. Drums and sackbuts! There's a phrase resounding of the sea. In the old days, British ships used to carry drums and trumpeters, same as an army."

"Don't you mean drums and nakers?" I queried. He fairly snorted.

"No! Naker was the old word for kettledrum—Arabic, same as the drum. Hm! There was a pirate of filibuster who specialized in his music, too. Went in for violins—ah! Here's what I want."

From a dark corner piled with all sorts of drums, he pulled out a curious object.

The room was crowded with drums great and small—war drums, Indian tubes to be held within the bent knee and tapped, hollow African drums with no skin at all—but this one was different from the others.

It was a section of wood, as big as a noble round of beef, inlaid with mother-of-pearl in the shape of butterflies and flowers, half of them gone, and bits of scarlet lacquer.

The skin was very old, fragile and darkly stained; in its center was a round black object the size of a dollar. Becker slipped the sling over his head and began to tighten the skin.

"You couldn't possibly guess where this came from," he said. "Especially if I tell you it was made for Geoffry Downs, the 'music' or drummer of an English ship, somewhere around the year 1610. This is the original skin, too, and it's probably a unique museum piece."

"An English ship?" I was skeptical, even if Goddard Becker were an authority on drums. "It doesn't look English in the least; it looks East Indian, Goddard. If it weren't so large, I'd guess it to be Hindu in origin. Did the Hindus have drums?"

He rolled his eyes. "And you're supposed to have brains! Why, the Hindus were and are the artists of the world in drums! They make drums speak, actually speak. They don't go in for volume, but they obtain miraculous tonal quality. Listen. What does this drum say?"

He struck the tightened skin, over and over. Now the name of Goddard Becker has a proper drum-sound; he has frequently made a drum speak it for me. Not this time. True, this drum had a human quality of voice, it possessed a resilient, vibrant timbre which fairly sang in the air, but it said absolutely nothing to me.

"I'm no psychic. I get nothing. A certain cadence, perhaps, but—"

I shook my head.

He sighed, and paused to tighten a tuning wedge.

"This is a *dhol,* far larger than ordinary. Hindu, yes, made to carry the sound a long distance," he said. "But it didn't come from India. It came from the old kingdom of Pegu, where the Dutch and English merchant adventurers used to go for cloves and spice. They fought each other, fought the natives; Pegu was a land of battle and murder and very sudden death—"

He broke off, riffling his fingertips across that bit of ancient stretched skin. Slight was the sound, but of marvelous tonal precision; it spoke oddly to the ear, suggesting all sorts of strange things, like the murmurous echoes in a tunnel.

"The *Heart's Delight* was her name," said Becker, his voice lifting dreamily against that low background of sound. "Her master was Burleigh Coombe, of Bideford in Devon. I'm not sure whether this is his story or that of Geoffry Downs, but it's one of the queerest things that ever happened on earth.

"Downs was the lad to take my eye, yet—who knows? Burleigh Coombe was a man to hate like hell, to obey swiftly, to follow through blood and fire. There was nothing sympathetic about him. He was efficient and ruthless. I wish you could see him—"

The drum emitted a coughing sound like a lion's menace—the theme, as it were, of Master Coombe.

INDEED, there was much of the lion about Master Coombe, both in looks and deeds. He had a rasping roar that could lift clear down the deck against a gale of wind. He stood six feet two, a barrel-chested, leonine presence with his golden hair and flowing golden beard like a mane. Now he was standing, looking at young Downs with a flush and a glare.

"Why, you parrot-buttoned sliver of tripe!" he bellowed furiously. "D'ye mean to admit to my face that your drum's ruined, the last of our music gone? If we were aboard ship I'd have you triced up and given a round six dozen! The drum was your charge. Sure as my name's Burleigh Coombe o' Bideford, I'll put you on a double line and

make you scrape barnacles wi' your lily hands! Keelhaul you, that's what! You're remiss in your duty, damned remiss. That's what comes of having a London jackanapes aboard wi' honest Devon men!"

"Tilbury's as good a town as Bideford any day, and London men can match any out o' Devon," said Geoffry Downs, a glitter in his eye. Lord, how these two hated each other! "It was yourself came in drunk last night and sat down on the drum and smashed it, Master Coombe, so like that or leave it."

The other men growled assent as they listened. Coombe, apparently on the point of eating the lithe, dark drummer alive, drew back. The rebuke was hard to take, but he took it and nodded.

"Aye, that would be justice," said he. "My doing, my fault. But who brought the drum ashore? Answer me that, lad. Who left it here to be sat on?"

"I did," said Downs bluntly. "You ordered it ashore to salute the king when we paraded four days ago, and I've not been aboard since."

"Very well," said Burleigh Coombe. "Right or wrong, you replace the drum and do it before we begin to stow bags o' cloves next week! And every sunrise there's no music to order the work, you get two dozen wi' the lash. So like that or leave it your own self."

And, his white fangs showing in a wide grin, he went about his business.

IN THOSE days the merchants came to Pegu with one monsoon and stayed it out till the other came to blow them back. Those that got there alive went ashore and lived, and got the scurvy out of their system, and if they had a godless captain like Burleigh Coombe of Bideford who despised neither wine nor women, it was a rare good time they had.

Not that Coombe neglected work. Two Dutch ships lay in harbor, and the Dutchmen had an agent ashore to boot, yet Coombe accomplished what few English adventurers had ever done—he had a full cargo waiting to go aboard. No scouring the islands, no overbidding and jockeying, no bandying with slippery merchants. Master Coombe went straight to the king himself, bellowing and roaring and ranting, and so delighted the effeminate brown ruler that orders went out. And any who disobeyed, were fed to the river saurians. So a good trade was had and the godowns were filled, and another week would see the *Heart's Delight* loading and the change of monsoons at hand.

Meantime, the men stayed aboard her by turns, half and half, keeping the guns shotted and getting her cleaned against the voyage home. Need enough of the guns, for the Dutchmen were fighting mad, having obtained few cloves and only a scattering of pepper and nutmegs an Arab *dhow* had fetched up from the islands. There had, in fact, been one savage brawl outside the palace itself, where two Dutch and three English were killed and others hurt.

After that, the king commanded that any white men who drew weapons should be stepped on by an elephant. The slim brown king, like Master Coombe, usually meant business; there was no more blood-letting.

This same evening, the men who were ashore talked over the matter of the drum, with hot words and many an oath. Their harsh west-country talk was scarcely understandable to the London ears of Geoffry Downs, but their meaning was plain enough. A fillip had been given to their burning hatred of Coombe.

He was not with them, having a small house of his own adjoining the factory quarters. He dwelt there in drunken grandeur, with the lass he had stolen out of a bazaar by sheer force and bluster and brutality, the king's favor helping. She was the daughter of Lal Cham, the Hindu trader, and Hindus were not highly regarded in Pegu, so no one cared.

"Geoffry, the master hates you," said old Dickon, the master gunner, pawing his wild whiskers and smacking his lips over the arrack. "But we're with you, lad. Eh, mates?"

The other men chorused assent. Hate Coombe? They hated him like poison; they feared him; they cherished him as a grand seaman; none loved him. This night they could safely voice their feelings. Ned Ruddock, the lieutenant, was

aboard ship with the bo'sun and half the crew, and there was none other to keep discipline here, with Coombe drunk.

"But where the devil am I to get another drum?" queried Downs, a smile in his eye. He scarcely took seriously his own hatred for Coombe. Once anger had blown out of him, he found hatred a hard guest to retain. He was that sort of man, and there were few who did not take to him at sight. Perhaps it was because he had too many friends that Burleigh Coombe, who had none, detested the very sight of him.

"Get a native drum in the bazaars," said Dickon. "But, whatever you do, lad —do it! That tawny devil meant his words. He beats the pretty golden lass —aye, he beat her this day! And once back aboard ship, he'll have the blood of us all."

"There's some may have his blood," growled someone, "ere we see England again! Just let me have a chance, if it comes to another scrimmage wi' the Dutchmen, and it won't be Dutch steel to let out the life o' Burleigh Coombe!"

"Stow your jaw, you fool!" snapped old Dickon. "Them as talks, never does. Geoffry, let things bide till morning. When the interpreter comes, I'll have a word wi' the lass, after the master goes abroad. Her father—d'ye mind the shop? —is a bitter heathen Indian, to be sure, but I've seen drums about his place. He makes 'em, if I mistake not. And with the interpreter to help, he might serve."

"Damn the interpreter," said Downs. With his gay smiling eyes and his warm heart, he had small need of an interpreter; the brown natives gave him smile for smile. "Her father hates the master for stealing her, Dickon."

"Aye, but he doesn't hate us." Old Dickon winked. "I've run errands for her to him, without the master knowing. Wait till I have a word with her in the morning."

THE master gunner could dare this, though no one else would. Each morning, Burleigh Coombe went to the king's court, bellowing and ranting and putting forth his huge strength on feats of skill, for the king delighted in him. He came back with rare bits of plunder, too—jewels and gauds, gifts from the king, or golden coins won from the princes at games. Master Coombe was storing up a fine bit of wealth for himself.

Lal Cham was helpless against him, and more helpless was the golden lass, as Dickon called her. With the king's favor behind him, Coombe could play the devil and did. She was a slim pretty thing with sad eyes and a pearl in one nostril. Few of the men ever saw her. Downs, in fact, had never set eyes on her. She was kept close and well guarded, but old Dickon had the tricks of the world at his fingers' ends.

Also, Dickon hated Burleigh Coombe with a bitter hatred, but kept it secret. Them as talks never does, he often said. He was not one to talk. And he pitied the slim pretty lass, who was little more than a child after all, and had been plucked out of her home like a flower from its bed.

The interpreter was a slinking rascal, with quite a bit of Spanish, which Dickon had picked up in his youth. They could get on well enough, and there was no fear of any betrayal; everyone in the factory and in the house hated Burleigh Coombe, though fearing him worse than Satan.

So, with morning, old Dickon accomplished his purpose and came back to Geoffry Downs and drew him apart. He gave Downs a little thin golden bangle.

"The lass said to give this to Lal Cham, and he'd know you were a friend of hers. As near as we could make out, she believes he could make you the drum; in fact, she seemed eager about it. She said to take the pieces of the old drum with you, to help explain the affair."

Downs grimaced ruefully. "There's little enough; it was splintered to a wisp, and the skin split. However, I've got the pieces, and the drumsticks."

"Then all should be well. Sorry I can't go with you; I have to meet Ned Ruddock, who's coming ashore. I may show up there later. Lal Cham bean't a bad sort."

Not a bad sort by half, indeed. With what remained of the old drum, Downs

went into the bazaars and found the tiny shop of Lal Cham. He went in and saw the small native drums hanging on the wall, and the Hindu sitting there, and took a seat on a pile of rugs. The brown man bent a fixed gaze upon him, and spoke four words, not kindly at all.

"Burleigh Coombe o' Bideford!"

Despite the clipped accent, Downs recognized the words. Presently he realized that they were the only English words Lal Cham knew—that they were meant to intimate hostility. The merchant knew him for one of Coombe's men and just did not care to have him around.

With this, Downs brought out the thin golden bangle. The brown man took it with an eager light in his eyes, an eager word on his tongue, but his words meant nothing to Downs, who merely laughed.

"Sorry, Lal Cham! We'll have to get along otherwise," said he in his blithe way. The sight of the token, he saw, had made an instant change in the situation. "I'm trying to get a bit of work done, and you're the lad to do it. So now let's get together."

Lal Cham nodded amiably; he looked more like a warrior than a merchant. Whether he was Rajput, Hindu or Pathan, young Downs had no idea whatever, and cared less. To him, a heathen was a heathen, brown, black or yellow. In later days, however, looking back upon the amazing thing that happened, Geoffry Downs was tempted to think that this brown Hindu might have been a great man in his way, and gifted with powers more than mortal.

So the brown man nodded, and the dark young Englishman smiled, and said what he had to say, and set forth the sorry shards of his drum. Once Lal Cham gathered what it was, he examined the fragments with interest, and presently he comprehended all that Downs wanted. He handed down one of the drums from the wall, a *dhol*, slung and worn like a muff, to be hit with the hand. Downs, however, showed the use of drumsticks, and that he needed a much larger instrument. At length the Hindu understood this also.

Now ensued a curious scene, while the narrow street outside was blocked by a jampacked throng looking on and listening with avid interest—Chinese, Malays, Thai, Hindus, natives of Pegu, and one or two whites. Lal Cham called a slave, who reached him down from the wall half a dozen drums of the *dhol* type. Each of them had, in the center of the skin, a black plastered spot the size of a florin.

Patiently, the brown man explained what these were, tapping the drums as he did so. After a bit Downs got the idea. These plasters were composed of iron filings, flour-paste, and other materials, firmly attached to the skin; by means of them the note of the drum was controlled. Fascinated, Downs seized his own drumsticks, which he had fetched along, and went to work on one drum after another.

Admiring voices broke from the crowd outside, and Lal Cham watched with keen interest. One of the instruments was admirable, with a magnificent tone; the odd plaster had lowered the pitch and heightened the resonance until the result was most unusual. When the Hindu got into his head just what Downs was after, he beamed in delight.

Now came more gesticulation, more sign-language and smiles and hearty laughter, as price and time for delivery were adjusted between the two. Lal Cham displayed the greatest affability imaginable; he was friendliness itself. This was a trifle surprising, because he was not at all friendly with Master Burleigh Coombe or with the ship's lieutenant, Ned Ruddock. He did not, in short, approve the use of his daughter as a temporary wife by Coombe, but there was nothing he could do about it, being only a brown heathen in the land of Pegu, whose king vastly admired the Devon seaman.

THIS was brought out when, as Geoffry Downs rose to depart, into the tiny booth came swaggering Jan Rijnsteen of Doorn, master of one of the Dutch ships in harbor. He was a dour, bearded man who had lived in England and spoke English well. He greeted Lal Cham and then turned to Downs with a sneer.

"You are a trusting man, to come to

this place! Don't you know this Indian has sworn by his gods to have the life of your captain?"

"No," said Downs. "As for that, *mynheer,* one place is as good as another, and one man is better than another."

"No place in these seas is good for Englishmen," said the other bluntly.

Downs laughed. "Better for them, *mynheer,* than for Dutchmen! And far safer," said he.

Rijnsteen spat. "English thieves! You steal trade and you steal women. Your yellow-haired captain steals a girl—"

"And the girl is satisfied," broke in Downs gayly. "Too bad, *mynheer,* you couldn't find yourself one! Why not try the slave market?"

Thus blew the wind, with hot words growing fast. Downs had no love for his master; he hated Burleigh Coombe of Bideford; he knew that Coombe had treated the Indian girl brutally; he quite sympathized with Lal Cham's desire for vengeance. But, all being foreigners together in the land of Pegu, one Englishman had to stand up for another, good or bad, against the common enemy. So Downs, laughing, taunted the surly dour Dutchman and jibed him into a rage.

And then came Ned Ruddock, the lanky lieutenant of the *Heart's Delight,* and with him old Dickon, the master gunner. Ruddock was anxious and had a sharp way with him.

"Geoffry, lad, I came to pluck you out o' this," said he. "Dickon told me you'd come here about a drum; leave it alone and come away! This black heathen will have your life, for he's in mortal hatred o' the cap'n and not to be trusted."

Downs broke into a laugh.

"Bosh, Ned!" said he. "Lal Cham is a gentleman; we get on like brothers. Let be. What one man does, isn't visited upon another man."

"All the same," began Ruddock, "I tell 'ee it's mortal ill work—"

"You may well say so," broke in Master Jan Rijnsteen, loosing his fury. "When the master of a ship steals women, takes them by force, he disgraces his country and all else. Besides, he's well known for a blustering bull who disregards law and custom, and rules his own men with cruelty."

Lean Ruddock looked the Dutchman up and down.

"So-ho! The Dutch sackbut bloweth!" says he, with a curl of the lip. "And what would you be doing in the shop of this heathen, except to stir up trouble?"

Lal Cham knew eyes and voices, if not words. Now he intervened, with the few words he knew.

"Burleigh Coombe o' Bideford!" said he, like a parrot. "Burleigh Coombe o' Bideford!"

He grinned, and slapped the knife that hung from a chain about his neck. Perhaps he meant to say that all hatred and quarrel should be reserved for that one Englishman alone; but so imitative was he of Master Coombe's vaunting braggart tone that Downs burst into a hearty laugh and clapped him on the shoulder, and the others laughed, and all surged out into the street.

There, two of Jan Rijnsteen's men were waiting, and one tripped Ned Ruddock, who hit the man in the fat belt; Rijnsteen laid out Ruddick with a hard fist, and Geoffry Downs blacked the eye of Doorn, and old Dickon took the remaining Dutchmen. In no time at all the bazaars were in wild tumult, with Chinese and Hindus and Malays shrieking murder and shop-fronts wrecked and the delighted crowd plundering and looting, and anyone who had an enemy taking advantage of the confusion to slap home a knife.

Blood was running in the streets, along with other unsanitary matter, when the king himself came swinging along on an elephant, with his guards and princes. The riot was quelled with edged steel and no mercy. The white men were dragged before the king, who sent for Master Coombe and the Dutch commanders and the interpreters.

When the king found that none of the whites bore arms and consequently had not broken his edict, he was vastly amused and admiring, and turned them all loose without punishment. The Dutch accused the English of starting a riot. Ned Ruddock accused Master Rijnsteen of envy because Coombe had a woman and he did not. This sent the king into gales of laughter; no doubt the interpreters had added a good deal to the

charge. The king presented Hijnsteen with a dancing girl, who was refused in prim disdain; naturally, this angered the king. Thus the Dutch were more than ever in disfavor and all was well.

"Downs," said Master Coombe, when all were back at the factory, "this was your doing. Therefore I sentence ye to six dozen lashes; and I remit the sentence because of the lovely shiner you gave Mynheer Rijnsteen. Is that justice or not?"

"It's the best I can expect of you," said Downs, who never feared to say the right word or the wrong one. "But look out for the Dutchmen, I warn you."

Coombe pawed his yellow beard. "So the puppy warns the staghound, eh? Impudent rascal that you are! Well, I know you love me, and once we're aboard ship I'll work the heart out of you, so much do I love you. Sure as my name's Burleigh Coombe o' Bideford, I'll bleed you at every joint afore we see England again! And if there's no drum to whip the men to quarters, I'll pipe 'em to the whistle of the lash on your bare pelt, my lad. Look to it, and God ha' mercy on you, for I shan't!"

There was no flogging ashore, since it would not do to have the natives see Englishmen with bloody backs; but Master Coombe was chalking up many a mark against many a man for punishment on the way home, and the men knew it. From Ned Ruddock down, they hated him well and truly, yet he grew in stature all the while.

To give him his due, Coombe got the trade, he got concessions out of the king, and he even got the export tax on cloves remitted. That yellow mane of his and the stark blue eyes were a notable wonder among the brown men, yellow hair being no less than a miracle in those parts. When he was drunk, which he very often was, Coombe could bellow like an elephant bull in rut, and to the world at large he was a glorious and heroic figure.

Three days after the riot, Geoffry Downs returned to the bazaar of Lal Cham, who had set his artisans to work on the wooden barrel of the drum. This was finished, decorated with bits of lacquer and mother-of-pearl, and the brown man promised to have it all done on the third day hereafter. Lal Cham was affable and friendly enough, but Downs noted now that at the name of Master Coombe, his eyes darkened and lit with a lurid flame.

A HOWLING tempest emphasized the monsoon change, and there was work for all hands, for departure was ahead. The ship, scraped and overhauled, was ready, but she had to be watered and victualed, and last of all the bags of cloves must be stored. The Dutchmen were also stirring, their two ships abuzz from morn to night.

"They're up to something, and no good neither," said Ned Ruddock. He had come aboard, with most of the crew, while the master remained ashore with his brown girl and his feasting at the king's table for the last few days. Downs and old Dickon, watching beside the lieutenant, nodded assent.

"D'ye note Rijnsteen has moved his ship?" said Downs thoughtfully. "Why would he do that, now? Both of 'em are lying almost in the channel. By the way, Ned, I must go ashore in the morning and get my drum."

"Aye; I'm for the factory, also," said Ruddock. "Must talk wi' the master about yon Dutchmen. He'll know. Trust him, drunk or sober! Day after tomorrow, we get the bags aboard, and he'll be aboard as well."

On the morrow, then, Geoffry Downs went ashore for the last time, and sought the shop of Lal Cham.

The moment he was in the bazaar, he sensed something amiss, but no cause appeared. Lal Cham was affable as ever, yet his brown, hard features held a startling difference; they were almost venomous, and the red light in his eyes was more pronounced. A thin sound of wailing came from somewhere. What it all meant, Downs could not tell.

The drum, however, was finished. He inspected it in delight; when he was about to test it, the brown man prevented him. Taking a stick with leather-wrapped head, Lal Cham sat before the drum, and fastened a queer look on Downs. He pointed to the big black

plaster in the center of the skin, showed his teeth in a snarl, and plucked at his beard. What his motions and gestures tried to express, Downs could not understand in the least. Something about a beard, apparently, and something about the black patch on the skin.

"Burleigh Coombe o' Bideford!" said Lal Cham in his queer accent, and struck the drum.

Geoffry Downs stared, and his jaw fell. The words actually seemed to come out, shuddering on the air, filling the bazaar and drifting forth in a magnificently resonant voice. He checked the Hindu, seized the stick, and himself struck the drum repeatedly. The same thing happened. The drum seemed to have the very voice of Master Coombe.

He seized his own sticks and sounded the "beat to quarters"—and then checked himself, astonished and angered. Once more it held true. Even from the two-handed rolling beat, that name quivered in the air and thundered at his ears. Startled, perplexed, rather disgusted, Downs tried again. Finally, it occurred to him that the mere suggestion from the Hindu had caused this effect, and with a laugh he dismissed the matter.

He tried to make payment, but Lal Cham stubbornly refused to accept any money. When he departed at last, with the drum slung about his neck, he was amazed and wondering over the whole affair. He returned to the waiting boat, and the men admired the drum; presently came Ned Ruddock, nursing a sore jaw, a split lip, and several loosened teeth. Master Coombe, it appeared, was in a tremendous vile humor.

"It's tarrible! It's fair gashly!" groaned Ned Ruddock, as the men pulled out to where the ship lay, this side the reefs and mud flats. "He near killed the brown lass. It was last night. They took her home, and I hear she won't live—"

"Lal Cham's daughter?" burst forth Downs. "Killed her? Why?"

She had cut off a bit of his beard, it appeared.

"He was drunk yesterday when she did it," went on the lieutenant. "And ye can see what he gave me. In a temper, he was."

Beard? Downs thought back. Lal Cham had been trying to tell him something about a beard; but that had to do with the drum. Or did it?

"Don't ask me; nobody knows or cares," said Ruddock. "About the Dutchmen—what did I tell you? Trust him! Popped on to it like a shot, he did. They aim to cut us off. Look at how they lie!"

He explained, and Geoffry Downs went from past bewilderment to future menace.

SURE enough, as the two Dutch ships now lay, they had the narrow main channel slap under their guns. If they opened on the *Heart's Delight* as she bore out seaward, they could riddle her with weight of metal, or else cut her rigging to ribbons so she must be borne down on the reefs.

"They'll not want to sink us, but to strand us and take us," went on Ruddock. "Ye see, they want our spice cargo; they'll get it, too. We're shorthanded now."

"Can't the king stop them?" Downs demanded. "If the master goes to him, he'll take hostages from the Dutchmen—"

"Blether! He's done with us, and the Dutchmen are no doubt paying him well to let them act. Master Coombe only snorted when I spoke of it. He's got a better plan. There's another channel, out through the flats yonder, an old one; some of the native pilots know it. We'll slip past the Dutchmen and be off to sea ahead of them.

That evening, Downs took the drum up to the quarterdeck, and with it old Dickon the gunner, to test out its speaking voice again; he had said nothing to the master gunner of the queer resonance or the words. The other men were all up forward, in an ugly, surly mass, for the master would be aboard with morning, and the devil to pay. After this long while ashore with wine and women and easy living, the men looked forward to hell aboard, and they were right. According to the bo'sun, Master Coombe had vowed two dozen all around, and

punishments extra, just to start the homeward voyage properly.

"Listen, now," said Downs, poising the sticks. "Tell me if it says anything to you, Dickon, or if the voice sounds queer."

He struck the drum four resounding taps. A startled outcry came from the men forward. Downs struck again and again. Old Dickon nodded and clawed his whiskers. In his eyes leaped startled fright.

"As I be mortal man, lad, it be the very tone o' Master Coombe!" said he. "God save us all, if this ain't witchcraft or the like! I'll hear no more of it."

Downs put up the drum, cursing the Hindu. Thought he, this would get him a roaring punishment when Master Coombe heard the drum on the morrow, since the master insisted on the "music" sounding for everything. Downs forgot, however, one important fact; no man knows the sound of his own voice.

Queerly enough, Master Coombe took a great fancy to the new drum. It had a fine grand tone, said he, and talked of how the crowds would throng Plymouth Hoe to see the ship come home again, and how the drum would tell them from afar the news of victory and rich cargo. Indeed, the drum seemed to put him in mellow mood, or else it was the arrack he poured down. He said no more about punishments.

Next day, the work went on fast; with what had been put aboard earlier, these two days saw the last and most precious freight in, and all stowage done, and the hatches on by darkness.

It was noted, however, that the Dutchmen had taken the tarpaulins off their 'midship guns this day. Their intentions were now past any doubt, but Master Coombe merely pawed his yellow beard and roared with laughter as he shook his fist at them in the sunset.

That night he took his hand to old Dickon the gunner, knocking him into a bloody heap for some mischance, and afterward pouring rum into him till the old rascal staggered to his berth, mumbling futile curses.

Morning came, but the turn of the tide was not till six, long after daylight, and a light offshore breeze coming up with the sun. Two native craft came out, and aboard stepped lithe brown men, as Downs beat to quarters at the captain's order.

"I'll trust no heathen pilot too far," said Burleigh Coombe o' Bideford. "Lay out the dinghy and four men to the oars! Now, Ned, lend ear, and you others. I'll off wi' the dinghy and sound the course these heathen give us, across the flats yonder to the old channel. We must pass within shot of the Dutchmen. Dickon, load all the sta-board guns with bullets. Ned, when their matches smoke, give 'em the music and let fly. Get in the first shot. Cut 'em up proper at the start. Follow me, but not too close. Ye must make a sharp turn to larboard, once acrost the channel."

THE two pilot boats started off, leaving the pilots aboard, one at the ship's tiller, one in the dinghy with an interpreter and the four men and Burleigh Coombe. As soon as the dinghy was away the anchors were heaved in and a bit of sail let out; the guns were loaded and run forth, matches were lit, and Downs stood ready with his drum.

The Dutchmen perceived instantly what was up and leaped alive, but too late for much to be done about it. They were moored with broadsides bearing full on the channel. Instead of going down channel under their guns, the English ship headed across, and they could not even warp around to bring their broadsides to bear on her. However, they got the stern ports open and ran out two guns each, and as the *Heart's Delight* came passing, within pistol-shot, one of the guns spouted smoke—one only. No more.

For now Geoffry Downs rolled the drum full stroke. It was the roaring voice of Burleigh Coombe himself lifting across the water. The starboard guns vomited smoke and thunder, the ship reeled and shuddered, but the drum sounded on and above. Screams rang out from the two Dutchmen, raked by bags of bullets. And from under the smoke, like an echo, roared another gun. One of the larboard broadside.

The smoke cleared. Not a soul was near those guns on the larboard side except Dickon the gunner, who lay on the deck. The Dutchmen were falling behind, the ship was bearing down on the reefs and flats, with the native pilot at the tiller holding her true—

A yell rang forth, then another; a chorus of shouts went up, and the rolling voice of the drum fell and ceased. Ruddock bellowed orders; the canvas flapped, men crowded the larboard rail. There was the dinghy, half filled with water, two men and the native pilot still living, Coombe and the other two men dead, riddled through and through by that larboard gun.

The ship lost way, bore down on her, a line was flung and caught. Hastily, the dead and living were hauled aboard; then the yards were braced and the ship filled on her course across the flats for the other channel. And on his own quarterdeck, astare at the morning sky, lay Burleigh Coombe o' Bideford. They brought Dickon the gunner back there beside him; the only man aboard struck down by the Dutchman's shot.

Ned Ruddock assembled the men. "Who fired that larboard gun?" he demanded. A shaky, wild, hysteric laugh answered him, from the dying man.

"I did!" cried Dickon the gunner. "I did, and it was the voice of Master Coombe himself that gave the order!" Ruddock turned upon him in deep-chested wrath.

"You lie! Dying, you dare say such a thing—"

"Nay, 'tis true!" cried one of the men, staring, wide-eyed. "We heard it too!" chorused others. "We heard it!"

Geoffry Downs, standing across from the dead master and the dying gunner, thundered at the drum. Beat upon beat, the voice of it rose on the breeze; he pounded at it in a sort of fury, the thought of Lal Cham recurring to him, and the lurid touch of red in those Hindu eyes, and the voice put into this thing of wood and skin. The voice of Burleigh Coombe himself, roaring along the deck in resonant fury!

Had Dickon really heard or fancied such an order? Was this the secret of the Hindu sorcerer? He was thinking this, when Ned Ruddock sped a hot word at him.

"Avast! Stop the damned thing! It's his own voice!"

"Aye," said Downs, and struck four last thudding beats. Old Dickon looked at him, gasped, and died with a crooked grin.

Once more the drum sounded those four beats, but now faintly, under the hand of my friend Goddard Becker. His tale had ended, his voice had ceased. He stared down morosely at the drum, and hit the old stained, yellowed skin with its sinister black patch, four times. Clear as a bell the drum spoke to me now, clear as an echo floating in air:

"Burleigh Coombe o' Bideford! Burleigh Coombe o' Bideford. . . ."

Goddard glanced at me, nodded as though satisfied, and put his hand on the quivering skin. The resonant echo died.

"I see you hear it now," said he.

I stirred. "Of course. A mere matter of suggestion, of auto hypnosis."

"Oh, says you? Bring the magnifying glass from my desk. Then look at this black patch on the drum—closely."

Perplexed, I complied. At first, I could see nothing whatever about the patch that was extraordinary. Iron filings and flour-paste, I remembered; blackened with the dirt of years, probably black in the first place. Then, focusing the glass more carefully, I detected a sudden glint, then another, tiny golden glints against the black.

"What is it?" I glanced up at Becker. "That glint?"

He gave me a sardonic glance.

"Why, do you suppose, the Hindu's daughter cut off part of Burleigh Coombe's beard? Why did Lal Cham work those golden hairs, or bits of them, into the plaster on the drums?"

I stared at him. Implications?

"That's all bosh!" I burst out hotly. "To hint at sorcery is nonsense. The drum—that voice—gave no such order as Dickon claimed. It's perfectly clear that old Dickon killed Coombe."

Goddard Becker shrugged. "No doubt it is," said he, and struck the drum again. And under its resonant voice, the voice of Burleigh Coombe o' Bideford, I sat silent—and wondering.

The hard flinty eyes, the hand reaching for death. . . .

TWENTY DOLLAR DEBT

An Off-the-Trail Story

By LAWRENCE TREAT

HE STOOD in front of the small service station that crowned the hill. Cars slowed up here and he had a better chance, if the world was ever going to give him a part of the chance he deserved.

That was the trouble. The world had backed up on him, double-crossed him, played him dirt. And he lived only in the need to hate his fellows.

You could tell it in his eyes. He had the kind of face that you didn't trust. Looking at it, you saw nothing in particular wrong with the features. A slight strengthening of the jaw, a barest change of the mouth and he'd have been all right. Dress him up and make him smile and he could get by. But this way, unshaven, in ragged clothes and with that sneer, he was a man you avoided.

He knew it, too. Sprad wasn't dumb. He was merely filled with a hate so bitter, so all-pervading, that it leaped out of him and made people shrink.

It was funny how they sensed his feelings. The occasional hitch he got always started out all right. A man didn't pick you up unless he was friendly. Then, imperceptibly, for no reason that Sprad could put his finger on, that wall rose and the hate filled him and he knew that the man who'd picked him up would stop at the next town and find some excuse to get rid of him. Then Sprad would grimace, and if he saw any kind of weapon handy he'd grasp it and snarl, "All right, you—stop here!"

It was easy, holding up the average man. Let him know you meant business and he scared like a kid seeing a ghost. Sprad would merely drop a threat or two, get the few measly dollars that were handed over, and then drive a few miles down the road. There he'd abandon the car and beat it. Off into the woods, usually, or to the railroad line, where he could hop a freight and put distance behind him.

There was something personal about every job that Sprad pulled. Whether it was a holdup on the road or rustling a chicken for dinner, he did it not only because he needed the food or the money, but because he hated, and wanted people to miss whatever they lost. He wanted them to suffer, the way he'd suffered.

Since the world was taking it out on him, he wanted to make it as bad a world as he could for everybody else.

He didn't look in a mirror often, but whenever he did he received a shock. He used to stare at his thin, weather-burnt features and think of the kid who was born and brought up in a small town out in Ohio. A kid who'd been normal, who'd played ball on his high school team and made the town band and gone out with the girls, like everybody else.

If the world had given Sprad a job, everything would have been all right. He was sure of that. He'd been crazy about Rita Crowell and all he wanted was a few steady dollars a week. Then he'd have married her and had no troubles. But the world smashed down on his ears and there were no jobs, and he wasn't the kind to sit back and feel sorry for himself. He went out and got what he wanted, the way any he-man would.

He slipped into it slowly. At first, petty thieving. Grabbing two-bit items from the counter. Something for Rita, usually, or else something to eat. When he saw how easy it was, he began taking stuff he could sell at Kalb's, on the corner of Oak Street. It was Kalb who got him in with Seller's gang.

Kalb said, "Get wise to yourself, kid."

"What do you mean, wise?" Sprad had asked, trembling and wondering whether Kalb was going to give him away.

"This cheap stuff. A dime for a fountain pen. You grab a watch that you can get ten bucks for, and the risk's the same, ain't it?"

He hadn't looked at it that way before. He'd simply taken stuff because he had to live, and wanted to buy Rita a soda and take her to the movies, like other people did.

He began to tremble.

"I guess so," he said. "I hadn't thought about it much."

Kalb smiled, like a man watching a rabbit struggle in a trap. "When you get ready, come around and tell me."

That was how Sprad happened to get in the gang that held up the grocery store. It wasn't until later that he realized he was the fall guy, the one who'd taken the risks and the only one who could be identified.

When they got him, he went mad. He yelled and got hysterics and cried his eyes out, because he was the rabbit in the trap and didn't have a chance. He broke down and threw himself on the mercy of the court and got five years.

FIVE years, locked up in the state penitentiary. He wanted to die. He sobbed aloud in the courtroom and asked for mercy and promised he'd reform. He'd learned his lesson and he'd go straight the rest of his life, if he starved for it. But the judge gave him a lecture and pointed out that he could have given Sprad ten years instead of five.

Sprad tried to hang himself by the belt and tried to slash his wrists with a piece of glass, but they caught him in time and put him in a strait-jacket, and kept him in the hospital. His spirit broke there. He just didn't give a damn any more.

The five years of prison were only three, between time off for good behavior and the action of the parole board, but the parole board acted three years too late and the man who came out was nothing like the kid who went in.

He learnt a lot in prison. The old-timers taught him the tricks and taught him hate and ruthlessness. And once he was what they called free, he couldn't go back to Rita, and what else was there in life? Just the bitter satisfaction of taking it out on everybody he could, of seeing people squirm and of using his wits so he wouldn't get caught again.

South in the winter, north in the summer. Riding the freights most of the time but preferring the road. Getting what he could out of people, slapping them down for the fun of it. Stealing

from the ones that helped him, because they were soft and the risks were less. Sleeping wherever he could, and sometimes, when there was a cold spell and he didn't have the price of a bed, not sleeping at all. Letting his clothes get ragged, his eyes shifty, his skin dirty. Feeling only one emotion, living for only one sensation—hate. To take it out on everybody he could.

Occasionally he hooked up with a gang and went out for big stuff, but he was too scared of being caught again, and after a job or two he always floated. Lived like a king for a few days, snapped and ordered people around while he had money, and then wasted it and went back to the road again.

AND so he stood there in front of the little service station at the top of the hill, where the traffic slowed up, and raised his hand to thumb a ride every time he saw a car, and sent a stream of cursing after each one that passed.

He had just finished a particularly fluent bit when the two men strolled up —the tall one with broad shoulders and big sharp features, and the stocky well-fed one with the little brown eyes of an animal.

The big fellow stared at Sprad and drawled, "You sure picked yourself the best place on the road, pal."

Sprad felt trouble coming and he tightened within himself.

"I been here a long time," he said. "It ain't such a good place."

"Then suppose you drift along and try your luck somewhere else," continued the big man. He was chewing slowly on a wad of tobacco.

Sprad hesitated. The shorter man grinned and said, "When Idaho here makes up his mind, he's set."

Sprad didn't seen the gain in arguing. It was late in the afternoon and he didn't care whether he stayed here or somewhere else, and they were two against one. He studied them and made up his mind that if he ever saw either of them alone he'd pull a knife and even the count, but right now wasn't the time to object. He spat to show he wasn't scared, turned and trudged down the road. Idaho's laughter followed him and sent sharp hate through his blood, drying his throat and lapping like acid at his heart.

A half mile or so beyond, he saw the sign. *Groceries, Soft Drinks.* A dirt road flanked one side and Sprad supposed people came from in back somewhere and brought business. The store was part of a cheap board shack, fairly new and with the paint still white. He saw a chicken coop at the back, and the woods crept up to within a few feet of the house. The set-up was made to order.

He strolled in and asked how far it was to the next town. A small seedy man, past middle age, told him it was eight miles to Pendleton and a mile to Grady.

"This here's Hall's Corner," he said. His voice was nasal, tired, complaining. Before Sprad could get in another word, the storekeeper began telling his life history. He'd come down from Michigan a few years ago. His wife had died recently from the damp climate and he'd gotten rheumatism and was practically a cripple. You couldn't make money around here because folks didn't have money to spend, and if he hadn't had a little something saved up he'd have died of starvation long ago. The rheumatism had settled in his left leg, where he'd been kicked by a mule when he was a kid and had the muscles torn out.

Sprad didn't answer. He wondered whether to pretend he had a gun or whether to hit the old man right off or whether to grab the axe there in the corner and ask for the money.

He decided on the axe and crossed the room. He was about to pick up the weapon when the door to the rear of the house opened and a girl walked in.

She had gray eyes in a flat, homely face that was plain as a tablecloth. She said "Daddy, dinner's ready," and then she saw Sprad and stopped short.

He didn't pick up the axe. He was a foot from it and bending over, and the girl wouldn't make any difference because he could handle a girl and a cripple without any trouble at all. But he didn't reach for the axe. He straightened up and said "Dinner" in a voice that was dull with dislike. He wanted to bash

in her dumb, homely face, and he wondered why he felt so strongly about it. Then he heard her voice asking him if he was hungry.

That made it easy. He'd get a good meal and ask to sleep out there in the shed, and in the middle of the night he'd get up and take the money out of the cash drawer. There ought to be a lot of money. This kind of sap didn't bank his dough; he was made to be a sucker. Probably had a pile hidden away somewhere in the house. He'd be scared to death and he'd tell Sprad where it was, and Sprad could simply take it and walk out in the woods till he hit the railroad line. There was a mountain and a river a few miles from here and the freights would slow up at the bridge. He could grab one on the run and be out of here before dawn.

HE ate like a wolf, jamming food down his throat, deliberately overstuffing himself because he saw there wasn't enough for all three of them and that if he ate more the others would go hungry.

The old man did most of the talking, complaining about his rheumatism and the country and the people around here, and telling what a great guy and a hard worker he used to be before the rheumatism set in. The girl kept looking at Sprad as if she were ashamed, and every time he glanced at her he thought how ugly she was, except her eyes, maybe, and then he'd blush a little. He hadn't blushed like that since the days he knew Rita.

Suddenly he couldn't stand the old man's empty bragging any longer. He said "Baloney! If you was that good you'd run a store better than this. Hell! Any guy that walks in here can see you're a lazy old windbag. Who you trying to kid, anyhow?"

Sprad burst out laughing. He stuck back his shoulders and got up. He walked into the store and stepped behind the counter, looking for the cash drawer. He found a locked drawer and guessed that was the one, and he crossed the room and was going for the axe when the door opened and the girl was standing there and looking at him.

"You shouldn't have said that, mister."

"Yeah? And who the hell are you? You're the one he takes it out on and somebody ought to tell him." Sprad grabbed the axe and swung it experimentally. Then he heard a car outside and he put the weapon down. "Nuts," he said. He leaned back against the wall and began picking his teeth. She was ugly as all hell and good for nothing.

The customer was a passing motorist and handed the old man a ten dollar bill. Sprad watched while he unlocked the cash drawer, counted the money and said, "Wait a minute—I got to go inside to change that."

Sprad strolled out. Through the window he saw the old man kneel down in one corner. Lifting a loose floorboard to get his money, just the way Sprad had supposed. Was this going to be a cinch!

He stayed outside about fifteen minutes. When he came in again, the girl was washing dishes and the old man was sitting in a rocker, reading the paper.

"I guess you got a place where I can sleep," said Sprad.

"There's that empty chicken coop outside," said the old man. "I reckon you can manage."

"Sure," snapped Sprad. "You two sleep in the beds, but a drafty old shed's good enough for me. What's your name, anyhow?"

"Allison," said the old man, and looked frightened.

"And yours?" continued Sprad, facing the girl.

"Martha," she answered. "And now what's yours?"

"What the hell difference does it make? I sleep out in the shed and get going tomorrow and you want to know my name. What for, huh?"

"To be friendly," she said.

Sprad snorted and spat on the floor.

"Who wants that?" he demanded. "What good is it, anyhow? I sleep out in the shed and freeze all night and think of how friendly you are!"

"I'll get the blankets."

She brought him two, big clean ones, and he knew perfectly well she'd taken them from her own bed.

He grabbed the blankets and went out, laughing. It was chilly outside, and sort of quiet in the woods. He went out to the chicken coop, spread the blankets and rolled up in them.

He didn't sleep. He kept thinking about the old man with rheumatism and about his dumb daughter and all the money in the house. He hated her, hated her even more than he hated most people.

He'd grab the axe and come in and demand the money. There was no sense kidding around. They'd know he'd taken it, whether they saw him or not, so he might as well show himself and have some fun. He wondered how much money the old man had.

He'd knock the old guy down and take his money. And the girl—his whole body went tight and dry. He'd just slap her down and walk out. He dozed off, thinking how ugly she was.

HE woke up suddenly, with the sound of a scream shrilling in his ears. At first he thought it was a nightmare. Then he heard the groan and the thump from the house. He got up slowly. Suddenly his heart stopped and he began sweating.

He started running towards the house. As he reached the back door, a root caught at his foot and sent him sprawling. He went headfirst to the ground, ripping the side of his cheek open and getting a mouthful of dirt. He began cursing. For a few seconds he lay there, groggy from his fall and wondering whether he'd gone crazy, rushing in there and looking for trouble.

After a while he picked himself up and moved back into the shadow of the trees. He flattened himself against a thick trunk. A light was burning in the house and he saw shapes move across the window. A tall lanky one and a short pudgy one.

After a while the light went out and he heard the door bang. He went on into the house.

He heard the steady sound of whimpering. A sound as of a wounded animal, regular, insistent, agonized. It went through him as if he himself were in pain.

He struck a match and stepped towards the front of the house, and then stopped as if a knife had been jabbed into his bowels and turned. It wasn't hate that he felt, nor any feeling he could recognize. There on the floor lay the old man with his skull bashed in, and near him, leaning against the counter, was the axe, new and shiny except where the blood had stained it. And just beyond lay the girl, moaning and crawling forward, and by the light of the match he could see the bruise on her cheek, as if made by a heel.

Sprad's mouth felt dry. He wet his lips but the dryness didn't go away. He tried to swallow. It was all here, just as he had imagined it. The old man dead, the planks torn up, the cash drawer ripped open, the girl lying there with the bruise on her face. And suddenly he didn't know whether he'd done this thing or not. He'd imagined it so exactly this way. And now at last she saw him, looked up at him through her tears and agony, and smiled in compassion.

Sprad uttered a gasp, turned on his heel and marched out. The hell with this. The hell with her. He didn't want to be mixed up in it. He simply wanted to get out and stay out.

He plunged straight into the woods, trying to figure how long it would be before the sheriff was notified and a posse started combing the woods. There was no phone at the little house. The girl would crawl out to the road, dragging herself on all fours, like a wounded dog, and she'd hail the first car that came along. In a half hour or so, the sheriff would start looking.

Sprad stopped and rubbed his forehead. What in hell was he worrying about? He hadn't done it, and the girl would stick up for him. She was just that dumb. And if he'd killed the old man, he'd have had money on him.

Sprad put his hand in his pocket. His fingers touched paper, crisp, crinkly. He stopped short and began sweating, while he stood there with his hand in his pocket, touching the paper, yet afraid to take it out and look.

"Hell!" he said aloud. "If I done it, it was the easiest job I ever pulled!"

He tried to laugh, but a sharp rasp

issued from his throat. Slowly, fighting his very will, he drew his hand out and looked. A ten dollar bill. A five. Five ones.

He stuffed them back in his pocket and began running in wild panic. He didn't understand. He had the money and the old man was killed and the girl lay on the ground with a heel mark on her face, and yet he had no recollection of having done it. Had he walked in his sleep, or had he gone mad or what?

He rubbed his face and felt the clotted blood where the skin had been ripped when he fell. That much was real, anyhow. And how about the two figures he'd seen through the window? The tall lanky one and the stocky one. Idaho and his pal.

He sat down breathlessly. He was a fool. What was he scared about, anyhow? He had the money and he was on his way out. Along the ridge to the river, follow the river to the mountain, then up to where the railroad tracks crossed and where he could hop a freight.

He could make it easy. Why worry, anyhow? Was he really *wishing* he hadn't pulled the job?

He took out the twenty dollars again and looked at them. They were certainly real. So what difference what he'd done?

SPRAD got up and began walking. Idaho and the stocky man—they were the ones who could tell him the truth. Well, where were they?

Sprad began nodding his head. He was slightly nuts, so he might as well act that way. He'd wished a guy dead and the guy got killed. He'd wished for some dough and it was here in his pocket. What the hell!

Idaho and his partner must have headed for the woods. They were old-timers and they'd reason the same way Sprad did. To the river, and to the bridge where the trains slowed up. Any bum would figure it that way.

The highways would be suicide, and in the woods it would be just a matter of time before getting caught. So it had to be the railroad.

Sprad found the ridge that curved westerly towards the river. A hunk of moon came up and gave him just enough light so that he didn't stumble over the roots and underbrush. He walked with a long steady stride, a stride that ate miles, and went on methodically, with no joy in the motion, whether he was tired or fresh or hurried or leisurely. He just walked, with no more effort than if he were on wheels.

He came on them suddenly, in a little clearing near the river. A thick, chunky bundle lying there asleep, and a lanky form sitting up to keep watch. Idaho sighted Sprad as he came out of a clump of trees.

The lanky man reached out and shook his partner. "Jeff!" he snapped. Then he jumped up and pulled a gun.

Sprad stopped short and threw up his hands.

"Don't shoot!" he cried out hoarsely. "I didn't do nothing! Honest!"

Idaho lowered the gun slowly. Jeff was sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "If it ain't the bum that wanted the best place on the road!"

Sprad said, "I thought you guys was deputies! Listen—the woods is full of them. Something happened back there in town and they got posses all over."

"Yeah?" said Idaho. "So what the hell do you want with us?"

Sprad stood there, a slim drooping form with his hands at his sides and his lips twisted and snarling.

"Nothing," he gulped. "I just happened along. I was heading for the railroad line and I saw you guys."

"Then beat it, see?"

Sprad moved forward a couple of steps.

"I'm hungry," he said. He saw a can of beans lying on the ground. He recognized the label. An uncommon one. He'd never seen it till he'd been in the old man's store, and the design had stuck in his mind.

He wondered whether they'd gotten the gun from the old man, too. They wouldn't have used the axe if they'd had a gun in the first place.

Sprad kept his eyes cast downward. The can of beans and four heavy shoes. One of those shoes had stepped on her face.

"I said beat it," repeated Idaho savagely.

"I'm tired," answered Sprad.

Idaho laughed. "He's tired, Jeff. He thinks he's got a hotel and he wants to check in. Hey, boy, take in the bags and show him a room!"

Jeff got up leisurely, approached Sprad and hit him. Sprad didn't do anything. He staggered backwards, lost his balance and flopped.

He lay there, and then Idaho stepped up to him, put his heel on Sprad's face and ground it.

Sprad let out a groan and wriggled away. He felt tears in his eyes, but he knew at last. Idaho, the tall man. Idaho had stepped on her face, and Idaho and Jeff had killed the old man. And Sprad knew now how he'd gotten the twenty dollars that were burning his pocket.

He picked himself up and started to walk away. He took a couple of steps and pitched forward on his face. He lay there motionless while Idaho walked up and turned him over.

Idaho said "Listen, Jeff, I got a idea." He took Jeff by the arm and went about twenty feet away. Sprad heard them whisper, heard Jeff grunt his approval. Idaho returned and said, "Okay, bum. You can stay, only you got to work, see? You got to do whatever you're told, like a valet."

Sprad didn't answer. He could smell the rich wet earth in his nostrils, the fresh scent of grass, the odor of life struggling and battling there on the surface of the earth.

AROUND dawn they started moving, following the river but keeping just out of sight of the water. The river might be patrolled, and none of them cared to take chances.

Sprad had misjudged his distance, and it wasn't until after daylight that they reached the railroad bridge. They saw it from the edge of the woods, and the three of them turned without a word and crept slowly back.

Two men with shotguns were guarding the bridgehead.

Back in the protection of the trees, Idaho said, "We better hole up. They'll watch it all day, but by night they'll give it up, maybe."

Through the long, dragging day they lay in a thicket, a couple of hundred yards from the tracks. Every few hours they heard a train go by, the long hoot of a whistle, the steady chug of a locomotive and then the rumble of heavy cars pounding on the rails.

Sprad, with his head to the ground, could feel the very earth vibrate in a sort of agony.

And all day long he watched for his chance, and had none. When Idaho went to sleep, he handed the gun to Jeff, who sat with it on his lap and never closed his eyes. And when Jeff was tired, he woke Idaho and they changed roles again.

Towards evening, Idaho looked at Sprad and said, "All right, bum. Now you earn your keep. Beat it down to the tracks. If they're still watching the bridge, come on back. If they're not, make us a little fire and start the coffee going." He handed Sprad the tin can in which the beans had been packed, and from his pocket he took out a handful of coffee.

Sprad nodded and got up. He saw the idea now. If he could make a fire and not get caught, the bridgehead was safe. But if Sprad didn't get away with it, they figured they'd beat it back into the woods and make Sprad the fall guy.

Well, it was all right with Sprad. He had his own plans, and he felt certain that if he was caught, he could convince his captors that the pair in the forest were the men they really wanted.

When Sprad came out of the woods, he saw nobody at the bridge. He picked up a few twigs and some leaves and took them down the gully just below the railway embankment.

He made a small fire, found a couple of pieces of scrap lumber and piled them on. Then he went down to the river, cleaned out the can and filled it with water.

Twenty minutes later it was boiling, and Idaho and Jeff strolled down the slope.

They scattered the fire till there was neither smoke nor flame, and then they squatted down to their coffee. First

Idaho, then Jeff. Sprad said, "How about a drink of it over here?"

Idaho laughed. "You don't need it, bum. You don't need no coffee."

Sprad got up and Idaho raised the gun. "Sit down, bum, and shut up."

Sprad sat. He wasn't as clever as he'd thought. Later, when they were sure they had no more use for him, they were going to kill him. He knew what they'd done and they weren't taking chances.

Hell, he'd have done the same thing himself, if he'd been in their place. Nobody was going to make much fuss over a tramp like him. The sheriff would claim that Sprad was the wanted man, and justice would be satisfied.

Sprad went tense and felt his will stiffen in protest. He began arguing with himself. He could sneak off and they'd let him go.

They wouldn't chance a shot now, before the train was in sight. He had only himself to think of; why mess up his life with complications?

But the arguments were no good because he didn't feel them. They were just words he kept repeating, and all the time he knew what he was going to do. And so he squatted patiently, his eyes gleaming and his arms barely swaying.

When Idaho picked up the can for another drink, Sprad jumped. He sprang forward from his knees and jabbed his fist at the can. The sharp metal edge rammed back and hacked Idaho's face like so much cheese. Sprad backed away and tried to kick, but Idaho's hand went for the gun.

For an instant, Sprad was terror-stricken. The powerful Idaho, with a ring of blood aroundw his mouth, the hard flinty eyes, the hand reaching for death in the form of dull silverish metal.

Then Sprad grabbed at the fire and shoved a burning ember at Idaho's face. The big man yelled out in pain. The gun exploded and the slug whistled past Sprad's arm.

He caught at the barrel and wrenched, meantime his other hand, still gripping the burning brand, plunged at the gun wrist. The gun dropped. Sprad dived at it and turned, crouching. He fired once. The bullet caught Jeff in the belly, but his charge carried him forward and flung him like a sack of potatoes against Sprad. Only then did his burned hand start hurting.

JEFF died there within the hour, but Sprad and Idaho went marching to the highway and back to town, a lanky form with a bloody wreck of a face and pain dulling the flint-like quality of his eyes, and a slim, determined man, lips set, a gun in one hand and the other hand wrapped up in a handkerchief. A passing motorist reported the strange sight, and the sheriff drove out and picked them up five miles out of town.

Two days later Sprad marched into the little store at Hall's Corner. His left hand was bandaged and rested in a sling, but he carried his head high and there was an imperceptible change in the cast of his features. He didn't look like a bum any more.

The girl jumped up from a chair as he came in. Her plain face was pale and drawn, and her cheek had a small, dwindling black and blue mark.

Sprad pointed to a similar bruise on his face.

"Me too," he said.

"I heard," she began. "I heard—" Then she stopped. "I didn't ever think there was men like that."

Sprad felt something within him give. She didn't know how nearly it had been he instead of the others. And curiously, he didn't hate her any more.

"I come back," he said awkwardly. "Like it was life or death, I sort of had to."

Her eyes held a wisdom that was greater than any words. For there was nothing to say, and in speech she was not clever.

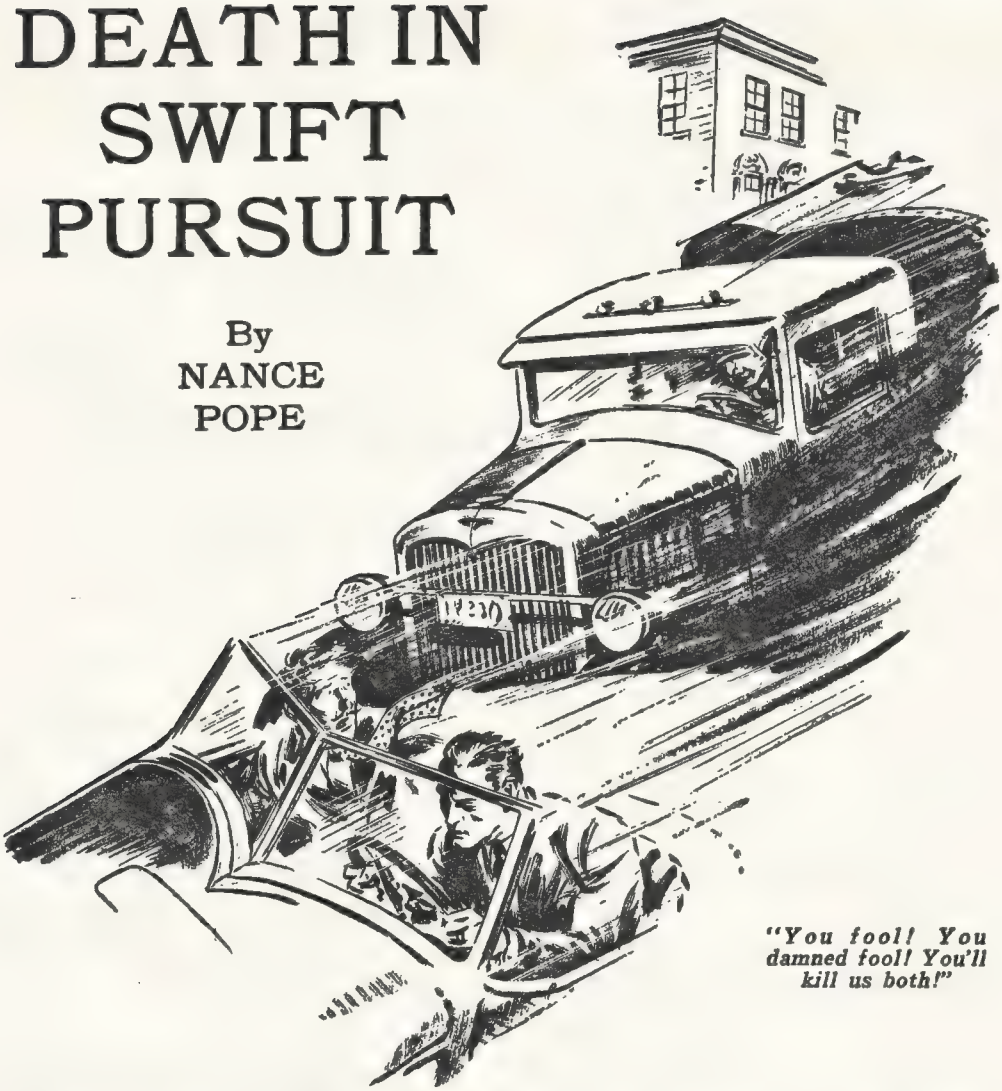
He gulped, turned away and then faced her. "You give me that money, didn't you? Sneaked out to the shed and give it to me. Well, I brung it back." His lips parted and he felt the unfamiliar tension of a smile. "I sure must have been sleeping sound."

She nodded her head, slowly. And then suddenly she began to weep. Sprad sighed and didn't know what to do.

After a while, he sat down.

DEATH IN SWIFT PURSUIT

By NANCE POPE



"You fool! You damned fool! You'll kill us both!"

PROFESSOR DAVIS'S budget allowed him a pint of good whisky every other Saturday. He bought it at a cut-rate liquor store in North Hollywood, where he could be sure he would meet none of his students. On this Saturday afternoon the man had urged upon him a different brand.

"Here, Professor," he had said cordially, "try it. Have this one on me."

It was not very good. But Professor Davis hated to hurt the man's feelings, so he bought a pint. Homeward bound, from North Hollywood to the crest of Cahuenga Pass, the Cockroach, as he called his decrepit car, claimed all his attention. But when they reached the crest and started down the long winding grade into Hollywood, he could forget the uncertain engine vibrating furiously under his feet. He was free for a while to pursue his thoughts.

He was remembering this afternoon that special five dollar edition of William Blake in the bookshop window, with reproductions of Blake's illustrations in color. It made his mouth water. But five dollar editions were not in Professor Davis's budget.

Neither were traffic fines, as a matter of fact. So it was with dismay, when he had passed the foot of the Pass and was traveling up the little rise on Cahuenga Boulevard, that he became conscious of a be-goggled motorcycle policeman on his left. Now, the Cockroach

was not the car to stop in a hurry. After the long grade downward in high, they must have been doing all of thirty miles, and her brakes only responded well at about fifteen.

But the professor knew of a little side street, an up-grade called Coronet Drive, a few rods on and to the left. There was a lucky break in the on-coming traffic. He swung left, nearly knocking the officer from his motorcycle, entered Coronet Drive, hit the steep hill and stopped triumphantly.

The motorcycle cop, removing his gloves and goggles, came over spluttering. But at the sight of the professor's face, so mild, so woebegone, the bawling-out he had planned died in his throat. All he said was "What's the idea?"

"My brakes, officer. Well—I remembered this steep hill."

"Oh, your brakes. So you couldn't make the stop sign at the foot of the Pass?"

"Boulevard stop? Oh, yes. Well, no. I—I was thinking, I guess."

"Thinking, eh? What's that in your inside pocket?"

The professor smiled wanly. "I guess you can see. It's a bottle of whisky."

"There's liquor on your breath, too?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"I'd like to go home, sir." The professor was not joking; his face was innocent and worried.

"So! You run through a stop sign; your brakes are no good; you've got whisky on your breath and a bottle in your pocket and you'd like to go home!"

"Yes, sir."

There was a pause, during which the two men looked at each other earnestly. The professor was thinking that now he would have to spend five dollars and have nothing to show for it. The officer was thinking that it would be like taking candy from a child. Suddenly the policeman slapped his gloves against the side of the ancient Cockroach.

"Well, go home, then!" he almost shouted.

He strode to his motorcycle, climbed on, started the engine, and was off in a roar. The professor looked after him, dazed by his good fortune.

It was when he turned back to his car, to the patient business of getting her started once more, that Death, in swift pursuit of a victim, brushed within a hairsbreadth of his spare tire. Neither the professor nor the Cockroach ever knew anything about it.

"I WARN you," Gus's mama had said, "you'll end up dead in a ditch!"

Pobre Mamacita! Poor little mother, she had had such hopes for him—probably secretly nothing less than president of this great country which she had adopted. Openly, she boasted to her friends, less pretentious Mexican women than herself, that her little Augustus was to be a great lawyer, or a great doctor, something great. Gus was less tactful. At fifteen or sixteen, big for his age, he used to look over the top of the sporting page at his dressy, self-satisfied little mother and her impressed friends, and say,

"Nuts! I'm going to be a truck-driver."

"Tonto! Foolish!" she would say, laughing. When the others had gone, she would rage at him in a torrent of indignant Spanish. But no use.

Later, when he grew older, twenty or so, he felt sorry for his mother and her disappointed pretensions. He would throw one great arm around her little shoulders and laugh down into her black eyes.

"No use, *Mamacita. El Señor,* the Lord made me for a truck driver. Look at my arms! Look at my shoulders! And in my heart, He planted the desire."

She would turn on him again in a rage and repeat her warning. "You will finish your life dead in a ditch!"

It was what he heard when he got his license, and the last thing he heard when he started off on every job. He laughed at her, but it was the kind of thing a man thought of when he was tired after a long day's haul. It was not good to have in the back of your mind. Sometimes he wished that if he was going into a ditch, he'd hurry up and get it over with. Then her words wouldn't hang over him like a cloud.

Well, he'd been driving for three years

now, all kinds of trucks, all kinds of trips, in all kinds of weather. The nearest he had come to an accident was the night he had slept, for a split second, on the long straight stretch between Bakersfield and the foot of the Grapevine. And the only time he'd ever been in a ditch was that time on Grants Pass when he slithered off the icy road into a snow bank, as gently as into a feather bed. In the Dunstan Fruit Transport Company he had held the record for the run between Seattle and Los Angeles. Less time, fewer accidents. No accidents, as a matter of fact, in the year and a half.

But Gus liked change. The same run got tiresome. The same truck, too. And now he was driving an oil tanker with a trailer and a piece of chain tinkling along behind. It was a noisy, rotten piece of machinery, old as the hills, old-fashioned brakes and only five gears, each one of them sounding, feeling like an earthquake.

Funny, like those things always happen, he wasn't even thinking of his mother or her stupid warning when the time came.

He had been pulling up the long Ventura grade toward the top of Cahuenga Pass, telling himself that probably the old truck would never make it again, not with a trailer anyway. The engine was creating an inferno of noise and smoke and heat under his feet. The sweat poured down his grimy face from under a battered hat, and he shouted an occasional, good-humored, encouraging Spanish oath, which even he couldn't hear above the din.

When at last he won to the top and felt on his face the sea breeze, so refreshing after the hot breath of the valley, he gave a great sigh of relief. There was the familiar cross on the hilltop overlooking Hollywood, and there, through the opening in the hills, he could see the white buildings of the city.

While he rested, his truck gathered considerable momentum. With casual confidence, he put his right foot on the brake so that he could slow enough to shift to low gear. With horrible ease, the pedal went down to the floor. He grabbed for the emergency brake. It came back loosely in his hand.

He felt a chill run from his head to the end of his spine. He tried then, frantically, to jam her into low. The grinding was terrific. He tried high. Same thing. Too late. Nothing to accomplish by stripping the gears? Nothing to do, then? And his speed was increasing.

HE WAS holding on tight, mentally. No good to lose his head. He was at the wheel of a deadly projectile. Probably hundreds of lives were in his hands. He had to think, hang on, grab every advantage.

He cut off his motor, took the center of the seven-lane road, put his hand on the horn-button.

He sent his mind ahead down the road. At the foot of the Pass, where Highland Avenue came in to make a point with Cahuenga, he would have a choice. He could either go straight down Highland to Hollywood Boulevard, or he could sheer off to the left, where Cahuenga rose slightly and then dipped down again into the heart of Hollywood. There was that little rise, he thought hopefully. But no, the speed he now had would carry him over that easily; and the terrific speed he would gather by the time he got there, would flatten it like a pancake. Over that pancaked rise would be Hollywood Boulevard, with its late Saturday afternoon crowds and traffic. People, hundreds of people!

There was a good solid clay bank, halfway to the Boulevard. He remembered seeing a truck with its nose buried there. The guy had gotten off with a broken back. But his had been a light sand truck, empty, too. *Diablo!* Bad business! He was going like the wind now. And the trailer was thundering behind him. He could actually feel the weight of it pressing on the truck, pushing it faster and faster.

Then suddenly, as in a vision, he remembered a little street off Cahuenga, a little street with a sharp up-grade. Coronet Drive! He had delivered a load of lumber there once. It went off left at an easy angle. With luck, he'd get a break in the northbound traffic, the entrance to Coronet Drive would be clear, he'd hit that steep grade and in half a

block or so the devil in this old truck would be tamed. He felt exultant. A way out! A steady hand on the wheel which was responding too damned easily to his touch. The help of God! And Coronet Drive! Coronet Drive! Coronet Drive!

EVER since his studio had bought the story, Cromwell Thorne had been fighting to play the lead in it, fighting as though to save his life. Really, that was what it amounted to.

"Your publicity department is killing me with their stupid stories about adoring, fawning women," he told Levinson, the producer, Friday afternoon. "Not only the men but the women are beginning to hate me. If you keep me in a silk hat all my life, you'll ruin me with my fans. I can play the part of that fur-trader, Levinson. It might have been written for me. For once let me get my teeth into a part with some smell and substance to it!"

Levinson shook his head.

"Look at you," he said. "Even when you're mad, your hair doesn't get mussed up. Look at your suit. Perfect! Look at your profile. Perfect! Your language, it's too—it's too educated. No, I'm sorry, Cromwell."

Thorne was furious. "All right! Don't give me the part then! But I'm sick of boudoirs. You can take this as final—before I'll play in another silk hat and orchid picture, I'll starve!"

On his way out, he slammed the door.

"He'll starve," predicted the yes-man.

"He's got a contract," contradicted Levinson. "You know," he went on, "his trouble is that he hasn't got guts. I haven't heard a damn out of him since I've known him."

"No," said the yes-man, "neither have I. He hasn't got guts."

"He's a lady's man. He's too—well, he won't do, that's all. He won't do for that part."

"No," said the yes-man with finality.

That settled that. They went home for dinner.

Thorne's long grey and silver car lifted over the Pass and down into Hollywood with as little effort as a sea gull rising above a feathered wave. He was to pick up his wife at the beauty parlor and drive her home. On the way out to Westwood Hills he spilled all the bitter exasperation that was in him. She put in just the right words at just the right moments. That was her genius.

"You know what he said about me?" Thorne fumed. "He said my language was too educated!" Her laugh came spontaneously. "Oh, Dorrie, don't laugh. I haven't come all this way to be smothered under a silk hat, have I?"

"I know," she sympathized. "I couldn't help it. I was thinking—remember the time we were trying to work out a way to get you a dress suit so you could get $10 as a dress extra instead of $3.50 a day as a crowd?"

He laughed ruefully. "It's a boomerang with a bang, isn't it?"

Something in the tone of his voice sobered her.

"Give me a little time," she said. "I can usually think of some way out."

"I wish you would," he said childishly.

With capable, sure hands he was jock-
And her heart went out to him.
eying the long car through the swift, heavy traffic. He signaled for a left turn, shot one experienced glance into the mirror above him, and cut through the opposing line of cars so neatly, so skilfully, that neither he nor any other driver had to use a brake. Dorrie, leaning back relaxed, hardly felt the turn.

"Gosh, Crom, but you can sure handle a car," she said with frank admiration. "Try to get Levinson into this car with you and then ask him for the part. I bet he couldn't refuse you."

Thorne laughed.

"No, really," she insisted. "When you have your hands on a steering wheel, no one could accuse you of being a silk-hatted ladies' man."

He laughed again, pleased, and for the moment forgot his troubles.

HAPPENING upon Levinson the next afternoon was pure accident. But the outcome of the meeting was due, without a doubt, to Dorrie's words which had stuck in his head. Levinson was ordering a studio car to take him home.

"Don't do that, Levinson," said Thorne. "Let me drive you. I have to go right through Beverly on my way to Westwood."

"Sure, sure," accepted Levinson condescendingly.

They walked together to the parking lot.

"Well!" ejaculated the producer at the sight of the handsome grey monster of a car. "Heard you had a new one. Some boat!"

They climbed in and started off.

"What's this gadget?" asked Levinson, pointing to a silver handle on the upper frame of the windshield.

"That?" The actor laughed a little. "It's a siren. The former police commissioner was a pal of mine. I did a favor for him and he insisted on giving me that, along with a special permit to have it. Darn thing's no use to me. But it was a nice gesture on his part."

They turned left on Ventura, headed for Cahuenga Pass. As they reached the top, they passed a heavy oil truck with a trailer, just chugging over the crest.

It was hardly two minutes later when, much to Thorne's surprise, about halfway down the winding grade, the same truck and trailer passed him, horn sounding, rattling, banging, going like hell.

"Those truck drivers are devils," complained Levinson, "Where are all the cops?"

But to Thorne's more experienced eye, the thing didn't look right. He accelerated his speed to keep the same distance between himself and the truck, and he saw that his speedometer was climbing fast.

"That truck's out of control," he said. "He's doing fifty-five now and going up all the time."

"My God!" exclaimed the producer. "And when he hits that traffic at the foot of the Pass!"

"That's nothing," said Thorne, pressing a determined foot on the gas pedal. "When he hits Hollywood Boulevard!"

"Oh, but Cahuenga rises before it reaches the Boulevard."

"Listen! At his speed he'll take that rise without even knowing it."

"Good Lord! Then you think—?"

"Yes, unless he hits something between here and there, something good and solid." Then he added excitedly, "There's a little street up a steep hill to the left. Coronet Drive! He could— He may not know it! He may not think of it! If I could overtake him and—" The grey car leaped ahead.

The producer began to get nervous. "Listen, Thorne, if I were you, I wouldn't—"

He shot a side glance at the actor. It seemed he had never noticed before what a determined jaw Cromwell Thorne had.

A STEADY hand on the wheel, the other hand on the horn button, Gus with his truck and its trailer went screaming around the last curve and raced wildly down the straight stretch toward the point of Highland and Cahuenga. He didn't dare take his eye off the road to look at his speedometer, but he knew he was doing eighty. That would be shaded a bit on the rise, if he ever got through to the rise.

The traffic ahead looked a hopeless tangle in the middle of the intersection, cars crawling away from the Boulevard stop sign. They must let him through! They must! He pressed his hand harder on the horn button as if he could make it louder. His right foot on the useless brake pedal pushed with ironic instinct hard against the floor board. He screamed a warning that died amid the clatter and the wind.

Then somehow he was through—into an incredibly small space and out on the other side. The Cahuenga rise, as he had predicted, was flattening before his speed. And Coronet Drive in half a second would be there on his left. Lucky! The road was clear. He put his other hand back on the wheel. He needed them both. He would have to be gentle, coaxing. Too quick a turn would tip him and make a horrible mess of the whole thing. He began to ease over.

Coronet Drive, there it was! In front of him and on the left. At once his breath was choked off. His heart gave a great jump and was still. For there, blocking the way, was a car just backing out, a wreck of an old car with smoke pouring

from its exhaust. It seemed to Gus he had been looking at that car for hours and through crystal, so plainly did he see every part of it. And then he was by. And he was thinking despairingly of his choice remaining. It was either the clay bank and him alone, or Hollywood Boulevard and a mangled mess of poor devils who would never know what hit them. Hell! That was no choice! He braced himself, body and spirit, for the clay bank.

"*Mamacita,*" he said aloud. "*Mamacita,* here we go!"

But just as he was tightening his grip on the wheel, his unbelieving eyes caught sight of a low silver car below him on his left, now beside him, actually crawling ahead of him. And into his ears, filled with the roar of his despair, penetrated the shrill shriek of a siren, like a pencil of light into the darkness. He got the idea at once!

"Blessed, blessed Jesus! He's clearing the way for me! Oh God, am I going to live?"

ON THE seat alongside of him Levinson was writhing and moaning. At the foot of the Pass, Thorne had had to make a wide arc around an approaching Ford. He had made it on two wheels and had lost enough ground so that now he wouldn't be able to overtake the truck before they reached Coronet Drive.

"You fool!" the producer had been shouting over and over. "You fool! You damned fool! You'll kill us both. Oh God, you damned fool!"

Until Thorne, exasperated, said between clenched teeth, "Will you shut your mouth until I think of a way out of this!"

So Levinson had subsided into groans and writhings.

Thorne was watching to see if by some happy chance the driver of the truck would know the little steep street. From the way he was edging over, it looked as though he did and was going to try it. Lucky break, too, the street was clear. Then he uttered a great groan. Just as the truck was easing over toward the left, an old car, smoking, came bucking back across the entrance of Coronet Drive. The truck and trailer straightened and swept by. What luck! What fiendish luck! Well, Thorne's next move was imperative. More gas. His face took on a small, crooked smile.

"That little handle," he commanded Levinson out of the corner of his mouth, "at the top of the windshield—pull it toward you—hard!"

There was no disobeying that voice. Levinson, frozen with fear, forced his arm to act. His next despairing moan was drowned in the shriek of the siren. He tore his eyes off the road to snatch a look at the speedometer—75—80—85—Oh God! They were beside the trailer now, moving up on the truck. Its din was fearful.

Crawling, crawling by! They and the truck were in a glass tube crawling, and everything on either side was rushing backwards at a mad speed. Then they were in front and cars were scuttling from their path, shoving each other to the curb like sheep. Pedestrians, panic-stricken, were leaping for the sidewalks.

Down there on Hollywood Boulevard —Thorne swore again—a trolley car was wallowing, like a deliberate dinosaur, across the intersection. Levinson began to grunt, so intent was he on moving that trolley out of their path.

Thorne was wondering how much brake he could use. The truck would make it all right unless he, Thorne, smashed the rear end of the trolley. Ironic if, after all, he should be the cause of the crash. He put his foot tentatively on the brake and shot a glance into the mirror. The result was fearful, the truck rushing upon him like a hungry beast. He slammed his foot back on the gas and drew away. Then again the brake, with an eye on the mirror. And the gas. And —praise be—the trolley had moved off like an eclipse shadow from the face of the sun. The road lay shining and straight before them. He tore across the car tracks at eighty miles an hour, and behind him rattled and roared the truck.

Down through the narrow lane of Cahuenga, across Sunset without event. The bend by the firehouse was worrying Thorne now. He could take it easily. His car was steady as a rock. But that high truck with its heavy trailer!

The bend took his attention. His tires protested loudly. But then the road was straight. He looked into the mirror. The truck and trailer were taking it wide, easy, gentle, little by little, using the whole road. Oh beautiful, magnificent driving! Thorne felt his heart warm toward that unknown driver.

Then they were racing across Santa Monica Boulevard. Sixty miles now seemed tame. And down the road, still wide and straight, toward Melrose. When next he looked into his mirror, it was empty.

He slowed to practically nothing, stuck out his head and looked back. The truck stood stock still in the middle of an irrigated field, up to its hubs in mud and summer squashes. He pulled his car around and started back.

"You can let go of that switch now," he said, laughing, to Levinson. The other man dropped his arm and fell back on the seat. Thorne snapped off the siren. The quiet was amazing.

Back on the high seat of the truck, Gus lifted a shaking hand to push his battered hat back from his forehead. His face was chalk white, but as he looked around him at the placid vegetables and comfortable mud, he grinned.

"*Mamacita,* not this time!" he said.

"Are you okay?" The man from the big silver car stood looking up.

Gus laughed happily. "Sure! And Mister, I want to tell you—"

"Here," Thorne cut off the thanks. "Here's my card. If you ever need a job, call me. I'll put you to work. Drivers like you are born, not made."

A police car, drawing up, saluted the actor. "Hyer, Mr. Thorne. Everything okay?"

"Okay, thanks, officer." He slid back behind the wheel of his car.

A few minutes later, in front of his Beverly Hills home, the producer was crawling out of the car with some difficulty. He turned awed eyes upon Thorne.

"Why don't you c-come in and have a drink?" he asked.

"Thanks," replied Thorne easily. "I think I'd better not. I'm a little late now, you know, and my wife will be wondering."

"C-come—" Levinson took a breath and tried again. "Come and see me tomorrow. We'll talk about that part. Per-perhaps—"

He turned and wobbled into the house.

Smoothly, the grey and silver car sped off up the street.

WITHIN his small room, Professor Davis took a sip of his hot toddy, and congratulated himself on having met such a kind police officer that afternoon.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

BLOODY years, bloody Kansas, bloody border warfare, Kansas-Missouri, Quantrell the Guerrilla—of these we've all heard and yet we know little enough about them. Who was Quantrell, or Quantrill—just what cold and desperate deeds did he do? Frank Gruber raises the question, and answers it to the best of his research and conclusions, here and in his new book "Quantrell's Flag." He says:

Of the names that have come down to us from the Civil War, none, with the exception of the leaders of the two governments and the general officers of their armies, is better known than that of Quantrell.

Yet—who was Quantrell?

A Missouri guerrilla—everyone can tell you that. But there the information usually stops. A few will add that Charles Quantrell was a Southerner who was wounded and robbed by Kansas Redlegs on a trip through the territory and in retaliation, swore vengeance. He recruited a band of guerrillas and ravaged the Missouri-Kansas border.

The basic part of this story is as much a myth as was the man himself. William Clarke Quantrill—spelled with an "i"— was born in Canal Dover, Ohio. At the age of eighteen, after teaching a term in a local school, he went to Mendota, Illinois, where he killed a man. He moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana, got into some more trouble and then returned to Ohio. He taught another term of school, then migrated to Kansas with some friends of his family.

He became known as a petty thief and associate of rowdy characters and was driven off by his own townsmen. He followed Albert Sidney Johnston's punitive expedition to Utah and remained there for some time, a hanger-on of the army camps. Ugly rumors followed him back to Kansas, but there he surprised everyone by settling down and teaching a term of school.

This was his last honest employment. The school term ended, Quantrill took up residence with the Delaware Indians and consorted with known ruffians and cut-throats, who made a business of raiding into Missouri for slaves, which they sold back to their masters. At the same time, Quantrill professed the cause of Abolitionism, in Lawrence. Late in 1860 he led a small band of Abolitionists into Missouri and betrayed them to a slave-holder. Quantrill, himself, helped to kill the Kansans.

Despite this astounding duplicity, Quantrill dared to return to Kansas. He was promptly arrested and would certainly have been hanged if his ruffian friends had not come to his assistance and helped him to escape.

After this incident, Quantrill realized he was through in Kansas. He went to Missouri, sponged for months from gullible neighbors, then finally followed one of them to Texas. He returned in the summer of 1861, with General Pike's Indian Brigade, and fought with the Indians at the Battle of Wilson's Creek.

He was a hanger-on of Price's Army at Lexington, Missouri, but when Price retreated, Quantrill remained in Jackson County. The Missouri border counties, at this time, were over-run by "border ruffians," men who operated singly or in small bands of from three to a dozen men. Bill Anderson was one of these, preying along the Santa Fe Trail, southwest of Kansas City. Thrailkill, Jarrette, Todd, Blunt, Yeager, Younger and a dozen other bushwhackers were better known during this period than Quantrill.

Quantrill formed the nucleus of his band around Christmas, 1861. He promised the guerrillas more action and plunder than they could get by themselves, and gradually the smaller bands merged with his.

After the defeat of the Confederates at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, thousands of Missourians returned to their homes. They were excellent guerrilla material. Quantrill himself never commanded more than a hundred guerrillas, but the other leaders conceded him a loose generalship and when he had something "good" up his sleeve, they went with him.

It is no over-statement to say that during 1862, twenty thousand Federal troops were kept busy trying to crush Quantrill and the other guerrillas. Their efforts met with an astonishing lack of success. This was due in part to the tactics of the guerrillas who promptly dispersed into the brush after every raid. Mostly, though, it was due to the assistance given the guerrillas by the Southern sympathizers of the border counties—four-fifths of the residents were avowed Southerners.

In their ferocious warfare, the guerrillas were not without provocation. Even before the war, Jennison, Montgomery, Anthony and other Kansans raided Missouri. With the outbreak of war, these Jayhawkers and Redlegs donned the Federal uniform and continued their depredations.

History is biased. It depends on whose version you prefer to believe. In writing "Quantrell's Flag." the author has had access to an extensive library of Civil War material. He studied more than 250 books on the subject, those written by Southerners as well as Northerners. In addition, he consulted the military records of the time—and in the end, was compelled to draw his own conclusions.

The story of Donny Fletcher is fiction, yet all the incidents in the story are based on fact. Some readers may doubt the possibility of a West Pointer ever having been a guerrilla. Major General George A. Custer, while at West Point, had a room-mate named Parker.

After graduating from West Point, in June, 1861, Parker went direct to his home in Western Missouri. As late as June, 1862, the name mentioned oftenest in Federal dispatches referring to guerrilla activities was that of this same Parker. Quantrill's name was secondary at that period.

Guerrilla apologists claim that the majority of the guerrillas became avengers because of Union persecution. In Western Missouri there are still people who insist that Quantrill was a Southerner, that he was going to Pike's Peak, in 1856, with his brother, that they were ambushed by Redlegs, his brother killed and Quantrill left for dead.

Cole Younger always claimed he turned guerrilla after his father was killed by Union soldiers. That his father was killed by Union soldiers, that he was robbed and shamefully treated, is a blot upon Union history. But—the name of Cole Younger appears in military records as far back as 1860. He was a bushwhacker for more than a year before he joined Quantrill, and it was almost another year before his father was killed.

Bloody Bill Anderson was a border ruffian before the war; after turning guerrilla he rode down the Santa Fe Trail and put the torch to the homes of his former neighbors. He killed without compunction. He was a mad dog, with a warped brain. Before he came out openly as a guerrilla he liked to travel the Missouri River steamers and pose as a gentleman. No blacker heart ever beat under silk waistcoat.

George Todd was older than most of the guerrillas, a man of forty when he allied himself with Quantrill. He was a Canadian by birth, an illiterate stone-mason by occupation. Although he lived most of his years in the North, he was a fanatical pro-slavery man. For sheer blood-lust, he was excelled only by Bloody Bill Anderson. He became so vicious that Quantrill himself was finally intimidated. Todd deposed him from the command and would have killed him but for the intervention of several guerrillas.

Strangely, the deaths of Anderson, Todd and Quantrill are all shrouded in mystery. A sniper was supposed to have killed Todd; four days later Anderson fell in a skirmish with Federals. The bodies of both guerrillas were identified beyond doubt—two human scalps were found on the bridle reins of Anderson's horse—but the specific manner of their deaths has never been established.

A guerrilla *could* have killed either Todd or Anderson, and it is worthy of comment that Quantrill was hiding in the brush not too far away, discredited by other guerrillas, but seething with jealousy. And after Anderson's and Todd's deaths, Quantrill sent out a call. About thirty guerrillas responded and with these, Quantrill set out for Kentucky.

The purpose of this excursion to strange territory has never been satisfactorily explained. Survivors of his band give two versions: that Quantrill intended to make a dash into Washington and kidnap President Lincoln; that he knew he could not obtain amnesty in the West and knowing that Lee's surrender was inevitable, he wanted to be in Virginia and partake of the general amnesty.

But Quantrill tarried in Kentucky; he could not resist raiding and plundering, and eventually, harassed Union officials employed a 19-year old hard-case to outfit a force of thirty men and keep on Quantrill's trail until he was exterminated. The man's name was Edwin Terrill; he held a Federal captain's commission, but in the early days of the war

had been a Confederate, and in the interim, a Union guerrilla.

Terrill was Quantrill's Nemesis. He harried and pursued him for a month and finally wounded and captured him. It was a paralyzing wound in the hip and after lingering twenty-seven days, Quantrill died. The remnants of his Kentucky band surrended and were granted amnesty. Among them was Frank James.

After the death of Anderson, in Missouri, the guerrillas elected Arch Clements their leader. He led them to Texas and back again in the spring and finally arranged a surrender in Jackson County. Jesse James was one of Captain Clements' "privates."

After the surrender of the guerrillas scattered. Some followed Jo Shelby and his Iron Brigade to Mexico and fought for Maximilian. Others settled down and became useful citizens. At least three, Fletch Taylor, Bill Gregg and Donny Pence, became officers of the law. Donny Pence, incidentally, was the best revolver shot in Quantrill's command. He was the best revolver marksman on the border, superior to Wild Bill Hickok.

Clements was killed in a running gunfight with Federal soldiers, late in 1866, but before then, on February 14, 1866, the wild guerrilla yell was heard in Clay County once more. A dozen guerrillas rode down on Liberty, killed an innocent bystander and robbed the bank of $72,000, the first daylight bank holdup in all the world.

Who were the members of this band is still a matter of controversy, after 73 years. Jesse James is generally credited as being the leader, but with Arch Clements still alive, he is my personal candidate for that dubious honor. At any rate, if Jesse James was not one of the Liberty bank-robbers, he most certainly became a bank robber soon after—and he lasted fourteen years, longer than any bandit in history.

Hundreds of stories have been printed about Quantrill since the Civil War. Almost all had their inspiration from an astonishing book, "Noted Guerrillas," published in 1877 and written by Major John N. Edwards, wartime adjutant of General Jo Shelby.

Major Edwards was a friend of Jesse and Frank James. After Jesse's death, he arranged the surrender of Frank James. One of the most brilliant editorial writers of the post-war era, his fancy knew no bounds when he got on the subject of the fighting qualities of the Southern soldier.

With a foolscap of paper, a pen and a quart of whiskey, he would lock himself in a room and elaborate a fist fight on the street into a major military engagement involving artillery and casualties—Union casualties—running into the hundreds. A phrase, recurring in substance, at least five hundred times in his famous book, which today is a collector's item, reads: "The six guerrillas charged the hundred Federals, killed 54 and wounded 31." When a guerrilla is killed, a minimum of thirty Federal corpses are always found in a ring about him.

Major Edwards twice took the Keeley cure —his widow published his letters written from the institution, after his death in 1889.

Yet for years, "Noted Guerrillas" was the authority on the guerrilla. John McCorkle, Kit Dalton and Harrison Trow also published books in later years relating their marvelous adventures with Quantrill. The book of the last, Harrison Trow, is a word-for-word plagiarism of the best chapters of Major Edwards' book, although Trow did serve with Quantrill.

By far the best book ever written on Quantrill is *"Quantrill & The Border Wars,"* by William Elsey Connelley, published in 1910. Unfortunately, the book did not have a wide circulation and has become a rarity, but for authenticity of fact and material, it is an amazing work. Connelley was for years secretary of the Kansas Historical Society and his many other works rank with the best biographieal material ever published in this country. Connelley paid Bill Gregg $600.00 for an "exclusive" account of his experiences with Quantrell. This work, never printed, is known as "The Gregg Manuscript" . . . Somehow, sixteen different "exclusive" Gregg Manuscripts, all in Bill Gregg's handwriting, got into circulation. The author has had access to one of these.

Some of the incidents in my "Quantrell's Flag" are necessarily controversial, as are the delineations of the characters of some of the men mentioned in the work. I may have erred in some instances; if so, it is not intentional. A former resident of Missouri, my research into the history of the Civil War in that state has been extensive, covering a period of years. I have personally covered the ground of every engagement described in the story.

For much of my material, I am indebted to persons residing in Missouri and other states. I cannot mention their names here. Several are related to characters mentioned in the story, others are friends, acquaintances. And two—two are venerable "youngsters" in their nineties, who themselves rode under the Black Flag, Quantrill's Flag. A word about the title—though the Black Flag or Quantrill's Flag have been familiar expressions and I use one of them for my title, I've been able to find no record that Quantrill ever flew any kind of flag at all in his swift raids and surprise attacks.

A GROVE DAY is a newcomer to us, though not to writing, and he's got a kind of sneaking admiration for Pancho Villa. More than sneaking, in fact, because it gets expression in his yarn "The Anger of the Dove." He says:

The Anger of the Dove has a background in fact. The yarn is fiction, of course, but during his bandit days Pancho Villa performed a hundred exploits no less daring. In the life of Villa, the Robin Hood of Mexico, there is material enough for a lengthy saga of personal adventure.

I missed meeting Pancho Villa by twenty-four hours. That was early in 1916, at the time when Carranza, who had been put into power by Villa's victories, had just issued orders that Villa should be shot at sight. We were living at the little mining town of La Colorada in southern Sonora, when we heard that Villa's troops, retreating from Hermosillo, were heading for La Colorada on their way across the Sierra Madre. We got out of town Saturday; and on Sunday, Villa and his men and their guns took the place. None of us was sorry to miss meeting him. . . .

I happened to be in Mexico when Villa was murdered at Parral in the summer of 1923. I recall that the government flooded the country with photographs of the wounds on the dead man's face, in an effort to convince the natives that their hero, who had escaped death hundreds of times before, was out of the way at last. Yet many of those natives, who fought at his side in the Revolution, still do not believe that he is dead. And in all but a coldly factual sense they are right, for Pancho Two-Pistols will live forever in the legends and ballads of the Mexican populace.

Mexico is a second country to me. I have lived most of my life in the West. I am at present a research assistant in the civil engineering department of Stanford University, California, and own a Spanish-style home in the foothills west of Palo Alto. Recreations include camping and collecting books and manuscripts dealing with Mexican history. Am author of four novels, as well as a college reader for students of Spanish. Also collaborator with F. J. Buenzle on *Bluejacket*, a reminiscent volume about the American Navy. At the moment, in addition to short stories, I am working on a two-volume history of the discovery of the American Southwest.

ANOTHER newcomer—new to us—is Lawrence Treat, with his yarn, "Twenty Dollar Debt," a story that's off-the-trail for us. He gives us the following account of himself:

Being chiefly a writer of mystery stories, I commit theoretical crimes wherever I go. I could walk into your office and wipe you out with a word (unspoken), and you'd never know you were dead. Which is the nice part about it.

I did something like that with the man from Michigan. He'd come to Alabama because his wife was in poor health and couldn't stand the cold climates, and he'd opened a gas station and grocery store. It was a neat little place and he'd built it himself, but he wasn't making money. No customers.

I was on my way north (I live in New York but I'd spent the winter in New Orleans) and I stopped off for gas and a cold drink, and we got to talking. We spoke about the weather and the wars and tax exemptions and the cotton mill workers in the town at the bottom of the hill. We talked for about an hour, and during the conversation I gave him a daughter instead of a wife, added twenty years to his age and killed him with an axe. He suffered so little that he smiled and shook hands with me when I finally left.

A mile or so beyond I picked up Sprad and took him across the Georgia line. Somewhere in my mind he met the man from Michigan, and I had a story.

About myself? I do books and stories and illustrated crime puzzles. They've been in box form and pad form and magazine form. As the author of a pad and a box, I never know whether to call myself a writer or not, or whether to list the titles along with that of my novel.

For biographical facts and details, there should be a questionaire which I could fill out with yes or no answers. Born? Education? Beer? Yes, and what else is important?

A STRANGER to us for some time, but familiar over twenty years for occasional fine sea yarns sailing out of New England ports—Richard Matthews Hallet. This time it's "Saturday's Whale." The story has a flavor that reminds us of the old classic whaling anecdote that runs. "Thar she blow-ows an' spaouts an' breaches an' belches an' sparm at that!" We'd like to read it once more—maybe we'll dig it up somewhere and bring it to light again.

Here's what Hallet, writing from Maine, says of his yarn:

I like to read ship's logs. Mostly, of course, they are dull reading, facts and figures, times, tides, winds and courses. But not all seamen are phlegmatic. The sea's deviltry sometimes strikes sparks from them. A captain at sea

has no friend, and if he is born with Inkpot Itch, the log becomes his confidant. Now and then he lets go the accumulation of his wrath against the sea-gods.

I went through five hundred log-books stacked on the shelves of the New Bedford Whaling Museum. Some of them have very beautiful mermaids, friends of the Captain's lonely hours, inked on the fly-leaf. All of them have whales, sometimes inked in, sometimes stamped. If the ship strikes an iron into the whale, and then loses it, against that date appears a picture of flukes only. Bad luck calls for no comment, but about every twentieth log, I found the whaler spilling his agonized soul there. Such a one was an irascible pious skipper who wouldn't whale on Sunday, but for six consecutive weeks, according to his log, he sighted whales only on Sunday. The handwriting in the log gets bigger and blacker and more spluttery, there are signs of mutiny in the crew, the Old Man is evidently ready to hang himself at the yardarm—but he won't harpoon a whale on Sunday.

It took me three days' steady grind, turning and turning salt-stained pages, to find this log, but I called it good hunting. I still say the right man could make a good story out of this.

THERE isn't much that can be said here about the author of "Heil, Mr. Hitler!" He uses a pen name and his identity is a matter of confidence. From time to time you may read a story of his in our pages under his real name. There's not so much fiction in this yarn as you might think—the main character and the climax are invented, and that's about all. The author made a certain voyage on a certain ship to get some information for a certain government which permits its citizens free speech and a choice between parties and candidates at the polls.

In choosing a pen name, the writer got a sardonic amusement out of picking a name that is reminiscent of a certain officer on that ship—the officer who was the most zealous Hitler-heiler and heel-clicker of them all.

H.B.

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ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

MAYBE the grass grows greener in Alaska, and gold is easier to get.

Request:—I'm an ex-sailor, at present prospecting the hills of Alaska, but getting fed up on cold climate. I'm thinking of heading south.

Four years ago when I was in Australia, rumors were frequent about gold prospects in New Guinea. Would you please give me some information about the possibilities for a prospector down there.

How many expedition members would you recommend for interior prospecting.

Is there quartz-mining as well as placer mining?

What sort of arms would you consider necessary?

Please explain something about mining laws, assessment, and requirements on aliens intending prospecting on the island.

Would also like to know something about the possibilities in the line of pearl fishing, amongst the islands and the Australian west coast. I'm the owner of a ten-ton sloop, forty feet long, in which I would not be afraid to cross the ocean.

—K. E. J., Anchorage, Alaska.

Reply by Mr. L. P. B. Armit:—The principal gold-fields are situated in the Territory of New Guinea (former German New Guinea) and most of the miners are at work there. These fields are in the interior of the island, transport from the coast being by aeroplane. Prospectors use the planes to carry in their supplies to the landing-fields, of which there are about fifty. From the landing-fields the prospectors go further inland, their transport from the landing-fields being by native porters; the number of porters varies according to the number of prospectors in the party. Two or three prospectors comprise the usual party; from eight to ten, or more native porters per prospector are usually taken along. A porter can carry about forty-five pounds weight of food, etc., but by relaying the loads from camp to camp, a slow process, a party can usually manage to take out sufficient stores, etc., for the journey. Travel, owing to the country being very mountainous, is very slow. So you will see that the transport problem is a difficult one here; moreover, as the native porters have to be paid for their work as well as being supplied with food and equipment (blankets, clothing, etc.), this form of transport is costly. All supplies have to be taken along with the party; there are no stores in the districts away from the landing-fields. Aeroplane transport from the coast, or from the landing-field to landing, varies in cost according to the distance that the freight has to be carried; the aeroplane freight rates range from about eight cents a pound up, according to distance.

There are some companies working reefs, or operating large dredges. Most of the individual miners work alluvial claims, boxing or ground sluicing being the usual methods in use by them.

The usual firearms carried by the prospectors are rifles, revolvers and shotguns; army rifles are not permitted.

The mining laws are much the same as in Australia. Any white man can go mining, but new arrivals have to deposit about $200 with the authorities on arrival; this deposit is returned when the man leaves the country. It is collected from him as a security against his becoming a charge on the government should he have bad luck and go broke, in the latter case, the deposit is used to defray his expenses and pay his passage away from the country.

It would take a great many pages to even briefly describe the mining laws; but I will explain the main points of the laws regarding alluvial, or placer, mining.

Any white man can go mining, but he must first take out a "Miner's Right"; the charge for this is about five dollars a year in the Territory of New Guinea, and about two

dollars and fifty cents in the Territory of Papua. These two Territories have separate governments.

The Territory of Papua is owned by Australia; the Territory of New Guinea is governed by Australia under a Mandate from the League of Nations.

At present there is not much opening for individual miners on the gold-fields, as most of the available ground is occupied. There is a large area of the interior that has not been prospected, but prospecting in New Guinea is a costly venture. The country is, as I mentioned, very mountainous, and there are no roads in the unsettled area, so prospecting is a venture that has to be backed by a considerable amount of money. The climate is not healthy, for malaria is prevalent all over the island.

The conditions of life here are very different to what they are in Alaska: and the cost of living is very much higher here than it is elsewhere.

Pearl fishing is not carried on here at present, except in one group of islands where all the fishing has to be done by the natives, no European being allowed to compete with them. On the Australian coast, pearl fishing at present is not being carried on with much profit, owing to the low price for pearls and shell.

I understand that many boats have been withdrawn from the industry there, so I would not advise you to go there to start pearl fishing.

I am sorry to write in such a pessimistic manner, but the facts I have given you are correct.

You would certainly be wise to keep away from New Guinea unless you have a comfortable amount of money to finance any venture you have in mind to embark on in this country.

If there is anything else you wish to know about this part of the world, please write again.

DOWN the drain of the Salton Sink.

Request:—I am interested in a section of Southern California known as the "Salton Sea". It lies somewhere southwest of the San Bernardino Mountains.

What can you tell me about this section as regards gold mining?

—John J. Kuhart, Scranton, Pa.

Reply by Mr. Victor Shaw:—The "Salton Sea", which has had no water for thirty years as it all evaporated about 1907 and '08, covered the depression below sea level of around two thousand square miles, chiefly in northwestern Imperial County, though a bit of it lapped well over into Riverside County. Its location is south of the San Bernardino Range and east of the San Jacinto Mountains. Fact is it lies between about 33°: 19'N. Lat. and 33°: 30'N. Lat. And between 116° and 116°: 30' West Long. Since it was caused by the overflow from the Colorado River that carried millions of tons of sand and spread it over the area, there is no use prospecting for minerals there at all. It is all agricultural land, where water has been brought in for irrigation. The Big Colorado does carry along some fine flour gold with its heavy silt, and pannings made of river-bank sands on its lower courses show some of it, in microscopic grains; but, it is practically impossible to save it commercially, even there, so if any was brought into the old Salton Sink it is impracticable to mine it. The branch line of the S. P. R. R. from San Bernardino to Yuma runs along its entire eastern shore limits.

A better place to prospect in this general area is the Turtle Mountains in the southeast corner of San Bernardino County. The rocks of this group of desert hills is favorable to the deposition of gold-bearing veins, being pre-Cambrian and eruptive in type. Beside this, it is said that the Lost Pegleg Smith gold mine, fabulously rich in "black gold", was in a canyon to the north and east from Ogilby Station on the S. P. R. R., perhaps in the south end of the Chocolate Mountains. This range lies due east from the Salton Sink some twenty miles at the nearest point.

A very good book covering prospecting in the Southwest is one by Horace J. West, 340 Wilcox Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif., price $1.00. It is called the Miner's Guide, and covers outfitting, gold tests, etc. Also it gives the history of some of the famous "lost mines" of the desert region.

Better get a copy of the State mining laws of the State Bureau of Mines, Ferry Bldg., San Francisco, Calif. Can also get maps of them, with certain quadrangles covering the Turtle and Chocolate Mountains named above.

Best wishes for a strike.

HOW to polish a gunstock—patience, elbow grease, and——

Request:—I would like to know how to polish gunstocks with linseed oil. Are there any new Springfield army rifles that are not used by the army that are still for sale?'

—Day Maxfield

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—In polishing a stock with linseed oil, I use the boiled oil, and generally darken it with a trace of walnut stain, as I like a dark piece of wood on my guns. First, I remove all the old finish, after dismounting the gun, and work the surface down with fine sandpaper, next

with steel wool, and then raise the grain by wetting the stock with warm water, and allowing it to dry, which makes the fibers of the wood lift considerably. I then smooth it down again, and repeat this until no roughness appears after the wetting and drying. I have done this twelve times on my Winchester shotgun stock before getting it as well worked down as I wished, but this was twenty years or more ago, and its never bothered me since.

Having done this part thoroughly, I rub down the stock with fine pumice stone and the linseed oil, rubbing the oil in well with plenty of hand friction. A couple of hours of this, then the clear oil, allowing it to dry in between coats, and about five or more coats in all.

I think you'll find this will bring you a good wearing and weather-resisting job.

For a new Springfield, which will cost you all in all about fifty dollars, you must join the National Rifle Association, at a cost of three dollars a year, after receiving the membership card in which you can order the rifle, specifying it to be shipped from the nearest arsenal to you, which I think is Benicia, California. The rifles are new, of course, unless otherwise stated, the Government having some used National Match arms at times for sale.

But for hunting, I'd prefer a Remington Model 30 or a Winchester Model 70, myself, though I own the Springfield.

THE blade is quicker than the eye—modern fencers are "wired" for electricity to score their touches.

Request:—I'm interested in fencing and would appreciate information on how electricity is used to score matches.

—Chester Miller
Tuck-away Farm, Chalfont, Pa.

Reply by Captain Jean V. Grombach:—I received your letter inquiring about fencing competitions being run by electricity and hereby answer it.

Yes, they are. Prior to the war, experimentations were being conducted for the development of electrical devices to conduct and judge fencing competitions in foil and sabre. All competitions, however, in epée or duelling sword have for many years been exclusively conducted and judged by electricity. For the past years all national championships in epée in the United States have also required the electrical system.

The explanation of the perfect or European electrical system of conducting and judging epée bouts is simple enough. The point d'arret or the barbed point of the duelling sword is a plunger which as a result of an actual touch delivered with sufficient force makes an electrical contact. Wires fixed in the grove of the triangular shaped blade lead to a three way female plug inside the bell guard. The male plug to fit this is attached to a wire which is run inside the fencer's sleeve and around and out the bottom and rear of his fencing jacket where there is another plug with a clip. When a fencer goes on the strip to fence, this rear plug is connected with a wire attached to a drum at his end of the strip. The drum will play out wire but if the fencer retreats toward his end of the strip, the drum will roll up the slack so that the fencer's movement forward or backward is in no way handicapped or impeded. Each fencer is similarly wired in, the third circuit being neutral to take care of the opponent's bell guard and the floor so that touches made on the floor or the opponent's guard will not register. All other hits will ring a bell on the Director's box, usually placed on a table alongside the center of the strip. This box has two lights and only one of these light up denoting the winner or fencer who scored his touch first. The machine registers the slightest difference in time so that only very rarely are there double touches—namely touches actually made at the same split second or simultaneously, in which case both lights light and according to the rules, both men lose since in a real combat both men would be hit by cold steel at precisely the same time.

In the United States, neither the machines nor the officials are as advanced in the art of electrical fencing. The neutral circuit here only takes care of the opponent's guard and two judges are required to watch and "invalidate" floor touches which register by bell and light. In Europe they use a metal strip or floor. In addition, in the United States considerable trouble and delay is occasioned by the breakdown of the electrical apparatus thereby converting some meets into contests comparable to six-day bicycle races. This will be corrected when the Amateur Fencers' League of America solves the problem of retaining a special experienced electrician to service all electrical meets.

HERE'S a response from Chile to something printed in this department quite a while back—the subject of the old passenger pigeons and the possibility that they may not be extinct. We suspect the birds that our correspondent writes us about are not the same as those that blackened the skies in our colonial days and later—it doesn't seem possible

that ornithologists have overlooked them.

I hate to confess it, but the truth is before me in two large gunny sacks full of big blue and purple wild pigeons; and this in our blustering year of Mars, 1939. Yet I read in a back number of *Adventure*, that these beautiful birds had completely disappeared; that some good sea captain had seen them battling their way across oceans and that they had not been heard of thereafter. I believe the captain's story, and have a hunch that some of the birds made the passage, for I am writing this in the southern part of South America (Chile).

I am not an ornithologist, and hanker not for argument, yet am definitely afflicted with the idea that I know a pigeon when I see one. I have read a lot about the great flocks of wild pigeons that once migrated up and down and across North America, but since the fates didn't give me a ticket for that show I cannot claim that the birds before me are similar. I would, however, throw some light on the subject.

Off and on for the past twenty years I have been visiting a little thirty-thousand acre farm down here to shoot wild pigeons during their annual migration. These birds come up from Tierra del Fuego, Patagonia, the Andes and the heavily timbered islands in the far south of Chile at the beginning of winter (June or July).

Their numbers vary in different years very much. Some years we see very few, and those as wild as March hares, which suggest that they are bands that never left the locality, but remained in deeply wooded valleys and about the peaks of the rather high coastal range. In other years we have literally hundreds of thousands—tame upon arrival but soon becoming quite gun-shy.

After the first heavy snows in the Cordilleras they may arrive from one day to the next. Sometimes we get news of them from farther south—sometimes not. In fact their movements cannot definitely be predicted. Bad weather and storms along the southern Andes may have something to do with the number that arrive in Central Chile. That is, snow and blizzards along the western slopes may shunt them eastward, and vice versa.

Sometimes the duration of their passage is short, say two weeks; sometimes they remain as long as two months; or, perhaps, are renewed by relays from other parts during that period. They usually disappear suddenly. In fact, I have rolled into my sleeping bag at night, where they swarmed in thousands, to roll out in the morning with not a pigeon to be found upon that little farm!

I have seen similar pigeons in the Venezuelan, Ecuadorian and Peruvian Andes at elevations from three to eight thousand feet. They are very scarce in those parts, and, so far as I know, never in flocks.

These birds are about the size of tame pigeons—if anything, lighter. Wings, tail and neck a bit longer. In short, they are more streamlined. Speedier! Plumage is brownish blue at a distance. Close-up it reflects reddish with a pronounced purple sheen about the neck. All in all, the plumage reminds one of that of the old turkey gobbler.

Pigeons are plentiful this year. But you'd be surprised how quickly one can, when accompanied by a few friends, go through two sacksfull; so I'll bring this contribution to a close, crank up the flivver and chug along out to the "little farm" for a spell.

—M. McMahan
Viña del Mar, Chile

METAL boats, and how they rust—and the insidious eating away by electrolysis in salt water. This letter and reply remind us of a yarn we heard recently in a boatbuilder's shop. A yacht was built of monel plates at a cost of nearly a million dollars. It was moored near a large sailing vessel, which presently went adrift—its steel mooring cable had been eaten away. The new yacht went on one short cruise and leaked very badly. Hauled out, it was seen that the iron of keel, rudder post, etc., were seriously affected. And because it could not be kept in a harbor with other ships, and was eating itself apart, it had to be broken up a month or so after it was launched.

Request:—I enclose a sheet from a catalog as an example of the boat in question. Are or can boats of this type and size be constructed of metal? Advantage, if any, over conventional construction?

As to conventional construction for same size hull, I have noticed some builders stress double planking. Is this of value?

—H. E. Heinz
Glen Ellyn, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Gerald T. White:—For a great many years naval architects have experimented with metal boats. In the vast majority of cases boats of less than 50 feet in length have not been great successes. In a few isolated instances the results have been fairly satisfactory. However I believe you can agree that the problem cannot be

a simple one or it would be universally solved. From a production standpoint any of the big yards could build metal boats as easily, and perhaps more quickly, than wooden ones. There must be a hitch somewhere that they do not try it. Also there must be some reason why the hundreds of firms who have entered the metal boat field never seem to reach any great stage of production. In fact I think the records will bear me out that there are fewer small metal boats built at present than there were twenty years ago.

I believe I can broadly cover the main disadvantages in the following remarks: If the metal used is thick enough to resist denting and other damage it must be so thick that the weight of the boat is increased to a point where propulsive efficiency is reduced. If the metal is thin enough to hold down the weight it dents, cracks and fatigues. Often what is known as "panting" sets up. Rust can be prevented by galvanizing or by the use of non-ferrous metal such as bronze. Galvanizing will scratch off if, for example, the hull scrapes along a projecting bolt head in a dock or piece of driftwood. Once the protective coating is scratched, rust will set in unless repairs are made immediately.

Rust attacks a plate on the basis of its square measure and not its cubic dimension. In other words a plate 1-16th inch thick exposed to the weather will rust just as fast as a plate 3 inches thick. Thus, in big ship work the plates are thick enough to allow rust to eat quite a bit away before they are renewed. On a small boat the plating must be so light that rust cannot eat away any of that thickness without resulting in a dangerous weakness.

Steel construction costs more, is more difficult to get repaired in any small port and almost impossible to repair without machinery. With a wooden boat the owner can patch a plank with any piece of lumber picked up on the beach. Give him a hammer, a few nails and a saw and he can make some sort of temporary job.

Another point is electrolysis. If the hull is of galvanized steel and the propeller shaft and propeller are of bronze there is danger to the galvanizing, particularly in salt water. Thus metal boats should have stainless steel shafts and wheels. These are more expensive.

Still another condition is sweating on the inside of the hull. This must be cured by some sort of sheathing to reduce the difference in temperature between the hull plating and the interior.

There are, of course, some advantages but the evidence to date is that wooden boats will continue to monopolise the field until some new metal, or new system of construction is perfected.

In regard to the use of double planking there is little to choose. The main item is the method of framing. With certain types of framing double-planking is necessary. With other types it is not necessary. It is more or less agreed by all naval architects that the finest boats are framed up as they would be for single planking but double planking is used instead. In other words such boats are doubly protected. Such construction is too expensive for anything but a very few made-to-order boats.

Standardized boatbuilders have developed several forms of rather radical construction schemes and in some of these the use of single planking would not be possible. In such cases the use of two layers makes a very good boat but the same must also be said for the single-planked jobs framed up with seam battens and sawn frames. In any double planked job the most important consideration is to see that the two layers are fastened together with screws or rivets placed only a few inches apart in all directions. Also the layers should be thickly smeared with marine glue, thick paint or some similar substance before the layers are fastened together. You *must* prevent water from seeping between the layers.

THIS barn owl is in a jam—his leg in a cast and nary a crutch.

Request:—About a week ago I was given a live "Monkey Face" owl which had been accidentally caught in a pole-trap (set for hawks) and which had broken its left leg so that the foot was held only by some muscular tissue. The bone was broken completely off.

I set the leg as best I could and bandaged it with splints and adhesive tape. As this did not seem strong enough, I took it off and put the leg in a plaster cast.

Taping the good leg I chained the owl by it (the good leg) to a tree in the back yard.

Do you think the broken leg will heal, and how long should it take to become well —when may I safely take off the cast?

If it will not heal, what do you think of turning him loose with the cast on his leg? I wouldn't try to keep him. Do you think it would be better to cut off the foot and turn him loose?

He won't eat any prepared meat like hamburger, etc., but he eats live mice and gophers and the other night I got him to eat a dead gopher. Can you give me any suggestions for feeding him? How much and how often.

—Dan Thropp
West Chicago, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Davis Quinn:—The leg should heal in three or four weeks—better leave it for four. If it is a clean break, fashion two wood or bamboo splints, very light in weight. These should be hollowed out round (concave) on the inside toward the leg, and must fit well. A slit goose quill is excellent, for strength, shape and lightness. The wound should first off, of course, be swabbed with iodine or other antiseptic, then adjust the splints, and bind your adhesive tape around but not too tightly.

If your plaster cast is still on, it will probably serve as well provided it is not too heavy. The above directions presume a clean break; if the bone is somewhat splintered or mashed the treatment is more complicated and I suggest you take the bird to the Chicago Zoological Park where there are technicians skilled in the care of such cases.

Otherwise, keep the owl in a large wooden box, no perch. Box must be dark all the time, else bird may attempt to fly and injure leg again. Feed mice and rats as you have been; wild-caught owls will not take raw meat as zoo owls do. I don't believe English sparrows are protected in Illinois, so you might shoot a few of these which your owl will relish. If feeding becomes a burden, turn your bird over to the zoo. They will probably be willing to care for it during convalescence. The big zoo here in New York does this occasionally. At least, I wouldn't set the bird free till the break was healed and strong.

I believe the barn owl, or monkey-face as you call it, is protected by law in Illinois as it is in all progressive states. If so, it is of course illegal to keep the bird after it is well.

Pole traps are illegal in many states and should be. These barbarous mechanisms destroy as many of our beneficial birds as the so-called "harmful" ones, and so more than upset any good they may accomplish. For sheer torture to innocent creatures this damned device is tops. Most victims hang head down by the tough tendons of a broken leg for hours and days till slow death through thirst and starvation comes on.

IN SWIMMING the crawl, let your legs boss your arms.

Having mastered the six beat kick, in crawl swimming, that is, three kicks to each arm pull, I find that when I speed up stroking and kicking there seems to be something lacking in my kicking.

There are times when sprinting, say 20 yards or so, I seem to be completely out of the water and moving with comparative ease, but when I try to analyze how I did it I'm up against a wall. I think the fault lies in my kicking. I never seem to swim the same way twice. Perhaps I should tell you a little about how I am built. I have a pretty strong arm pull and should I master a kick to go with it I'm sure my time in sprinting would take a decided descent. Perhaps there is a need for inter-timing in my six beat kick. I'd appreciate very much if you would straighten me out on this.

—Edward Muraske
Meriden, Conn.

Reply by Mr. L. deB. Handley:—Personal swimming problems are not easy to solve at long range. Probably I could ascertain the cause of your trouble at a glance. But without seeing you swim, I am at a loss.

The fact that you experience no difficulty in 20 yard sprinting is readily explained. In performing the swimming movements swiftly, and speeding through the water, faults of stroke are minimized, for the simple reason that sheer muscular power overcomes lack of form. That is why so many competitive swimmers with incorrect strokes do quite well in 50 and 100 yard races, but go to pieces over longer distances.

If your trouble is due to poor intertiming of arm and legs, as you surmise, there is a mechanical and sure-fire method for gaining rhythm. Just set the legs in motion before the arms in getting under way. Do this always, whether you start with a dive or from treadwater position. Take half a dozen very narrow leg threshes, then bring the arms into play.

The legs then set the pace for the arms and before long the perfect co-relation of the muscular system causes the arms to coordinate unwittingly with the legs. Don't try to consciously intertime the action. That leads to awkward, labored motions. Let nature teach you.

One thing will help you, in this and in mastering body balance. Let the feet follow the slight roll sought to facilitate breathing. Throughout the recovery of the under arm, when the body is flat and the head straight, the feet should thrash directly up and down. But throughout the recovery of the top arm, while the body is a bit on its side and the head twisted to inhale, the feet should whip at an angle. In other words, the feet should be at right angles to the shoulders always, swaying with the roll of the body. It is a costly fault to let them thrash steadily up and down, twisting at the waist for the respiratory acts. The whole stroke is affected.

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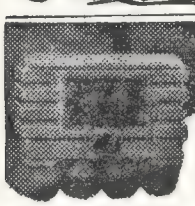

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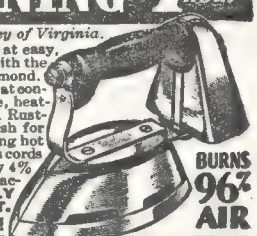

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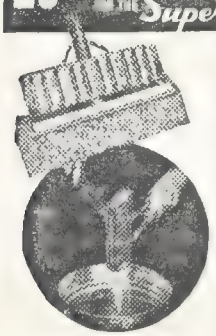

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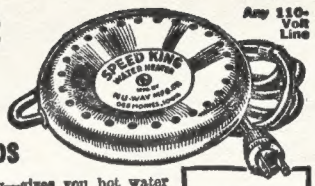

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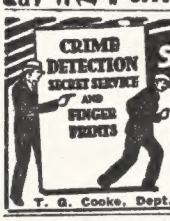

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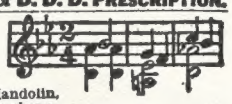

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BALLOON TIRES

Size Rim	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40-21	$2.15	$1.05
29x4.50-20	2.35	1.05
30x4.50-21	2.40	1.15
28x4.75-19	2.45	1.25
29x4.75-20	2.80	1.25
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.25
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25
5.25-17	2.90	1.35
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.35	1.40
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.45
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.55
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.75
6.00-16	3.75	1.45

REGULAR CORD TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3½	$2.35	$0.95
31x4	2.95	1.35
32x4	2.95	1.25
33x4	2.95	1.25
34x4	3.25	1.35
32x4½	3.35	1.45

HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES
(High Pressure)

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x5	$4.25	$1.95
33x5	3.95	1.75
34x5	4.25	2.25
32x6	7.95	2.95
36x6	9.95	4.45

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	$3.75	$1.65
6.50-20	4.45	1.95
7.00-20	5.95	2.95
ALL OTHER SIZES		

Size	Tires	Tubes
32x4½	$3.45	$1.45
34x4½	3.45	1.45
30x5	3.65	1.65
33x5	3.75	1.75
35x5	3.95	1.75

Size	Tires	Tubes
34x7	$10.95	$4.65
38x7	10.95	4.65
36x8	11.45	4.95
40x8	13.25	4.95

Size	Tires	Tubes
7.50-20	$6.95	$3.75
8.25-20	8.95	4.95
9.00-20	10.95	5.85
9.75-20	13.95	6.45

DEALERS WANTED

SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered. ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct 5 per cent if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

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ORIGINAL SONG POEMS

any subject. YOU CAN write the words for a song. Don't delay—send us your poem for immediate consideration.

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COSTS ONLY $1 PER MONTH

The **"Security" Sickness and Accident Policy gives** your family quick cash when income is stopped. Pays CASH protection of **$25.00 a week** up to ten weeks for accident—$25.00 **each week** for sickness, as specified in policy—and up to $8,000.00 for accidental death, loss of hands, eyes or feet. Also other liberal features. Examine this **new Security Policy** on our 10-day Free Inspection Offer!

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FACTORY-TO-YOU SAVES YOU UP TO 50%

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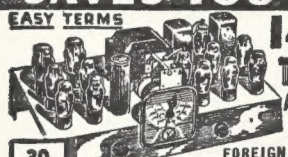

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Other models from 5 to 17 Tubes, and up to 5 Wave Bands. Write for FREE 1940 catalog, showing complete line. (User-agents make extra money!) See MIDWEST'S Answer to TRADE-INS!

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IF you suffer with those terrible attacks of Asthma when it is cold and damp; if raw, Wintry winds make you choke as if each gasp for breath was the very last; if restful sleep is impossible because of the struggle to breathe; if you feel the disease is slowly wearing your life away, don't fail to send at once to the Frontier Asthma Co. for a free trial of a remarkable method. No matter where you live or whether you have any faith in any remedy under the Sun, send for this free trial. If you have suffered for a lifetime and tried everything you could learn of without relief; even if you are utterly discouraged, do not abandon hope but send today for this free trial. It will cost you nothing. Address

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CHART FREE!

The Two-Methods in each package of Hall's Nasal Catarrh Treatment relieve phlegm-filled throat, stuffed-up nose, catarrhal bad breath, hawking and Sinus headaches caused by Nasal Congestion. RELIEF OR YOUR MONEY BACK. At all Druggists. Send Post-card for Free Catarrh & Diet Chart. OUR 67th YEAR IN BUSINESS.

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Practically Unbreakable Roofless, Partial or Transparent!

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Calling All Cars!

A MYSTERIOUS DISCOVERY SAVES UP TO 30% on GASOLINE!

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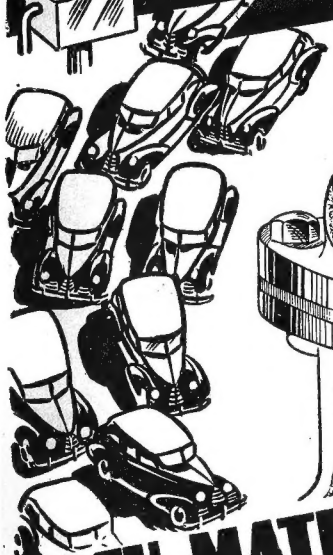

Answer this call! Investigate this remarkable discovery that trims dollars off gasoline bills —gives you worthwhile gas savings—more power — greater speed — quicker pickup — faster acceleration. Proven so efficient, it is guaranteed to save up to 30% and give better performance or the trial costs you nothing.

Automatic Supercharge Principle

Vacu-matic is *entirely different!* It operates on the supercharge principle by automatically adding a charge of extra oxygen, drawn free from the outer air, into the heart of the gas mixture. It is entirely automatic and allows the motor to "breathe" at the correct time, opening and closing *automatically* as required to save dollars on gas costs.

VACU-MATIC "Scores" Again

SETS NEW COAST-TO-CHICAGO RECORD

BOB McKENZIE
TRANSCONTINENTAL AUTOMOBILE CHAMPION
COAST TO COAST

Vacu-matic Carburetor Co.
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Dear Sirs:

Having just completed a new speed record between Los Angeles and Chicago, driving a Chevrolet equipped with a Vacu-matic carburetor for control, I thought you might be interested in knowing some of the facts and the important part Vacu-matic played in the success of the run.

The distance covered was 2322 miles in thirty-nine hours and forty-two minutes, officially timed by Western Union, which gave me an average speed of 59.7 M.P.H. based on elapsed time and with the Vacu-matic averaged 18-1/2 miles per gallon on gasoline.

Before leaving Los Angeles, we made several test runs both with and without the Vacu-matic, and the tests proved that Vacu-matic increased my gas mileage 3-1/2 miles per gallon at the driving speed of 60 M.P.H. and also very noticeable increase in both acceleration and power.

Yours very truly,
Bob McKenzie

In addition to establishing new mileage records on cars in all sections of the country, the Vacu-matic has proven itself on thousands of road tests and on dynamometer tests which duplicate road conditions and record accurate mileage and horse power increases.

You, too, can make a road test with Vacu-matic on your car and prove its worthwhile gas savings to your entire satisfaction.

Learn all about this remarkable discovery. Get the facts NOW!

Fits All Cars

Easy To Install

Vacu-matic is constructed of six parts assembled and fused into one unit, adjusted and *sealed at the factory.* Nothing to regulate. Any motorist can install in ten minutes. The free offer coupon will bring all the facts. Mail it today!

The Vacu-matic Co. **Wauwatosa, Wis.**

Sworn Proof of Gas Savings

This certifies that I have carefully read 300 original letters received from Vacu-matic users testifying to gas savings up to 30%, many reporting added power, smoother running, and quicker pick-up. These letters are just a small part of the larger file of enthusiastic user letters that I saw at the company offices.

Signed Marcus J. Clancy
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Vacu-matic offers a splendid opportunity for unusual sales and profits. Every car, truck, tractor, and motorcycle owner a prospect. Valuable territories now being assigned. If you help us introduce it to a friend, you can obtain your own free. Check and mail coupon today.

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Please send full particulars about VACU-MATIC, also how I may obtain one for my own car FREE. This does not obligate me in any way.

Name .....

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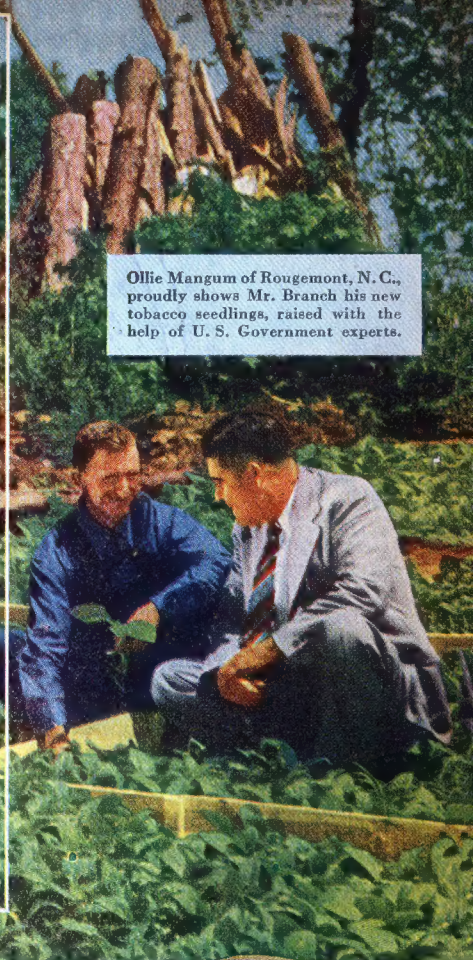
☐ Check here if interested in Agency Proposition.

"Uncle Sam Helped make tobacco better than ever!

...and Luckies have bought the 'cream' of the better-than-ever crops!" says Billie L. Branch, a tobacco auctioneer for 21 years.



Ollie Mangum of Rougemont, N. C., proudly shows Mr. Branch his new tobacco seedlings, raised with the help of U. S. Government experts.

Suppose you talked with this independent expert about Luckies:

You: "In recent years, you say, tobacco crops have been better than ever?"

Mr. Branch: "Yes, even though crops vary with weather conditions, new U. S. Government methods have worked wonders for farmers."

You: "Do Luckies buy this better kind of tobacco?"

Mr. B: "Yes, and they always *have* bought the choicer grades. That's why I've smoked Lucky Strikes for the last 15 years."

You: "What do the other independent experts like you smoke?"

Mr. B: "Among the tobacco men I know, Luckies are by far the favorite!"

Try Luckies for a week. You'll find that the "Toasting" process makes them easy on your throat—because it takes out certain harsh throat irritants that are found in all tobacco.

You'll also find out why—**WITH MEN WHO KNOW TOBACCO BEST—IT'S LUCKIES 2 TO 1!**